

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 20 – NO. 7

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 23, 2021

Housing Advocates Call For Christmas Eve Vigil

By MIKE JACKSON

MONTAGUE CITY – Local activists are planning a to stage a vigil this Friday, Christmas Eve, outside the abandoned Farren Care Center building to highlight the pressing need for emergency housing in Franklin County.

Owner Trinity Health of New England closed the longterm care facility last winter, moving its residents to a Holyoke nursing home which it then sold to a private healthcare company.

The vigil, scheduled for 2 to 3 p.m., is organized by individuals, though the Interfaith Council of Franklin County, Traprock Center, and Franklin County Continuing the Political Revolution have boosted their public call.

“We just need additional emergency beds for Franklin County, and we need them now,” said Cate Woolner of Northfield, one of the primary organizers. “The Farren has shifted away from being the primary focus.”

Trinity’s recent announcement that it plans to demolish the building and donate the land to the town has been met with calls by local residents for a study of its reuse, though the building’s condition is reportedly poor. Trinity has stated that it would cost \$25 million to bring the structure up to code.

“We didn’t realize it had deteriorated to the point where it couldn’t be salvaged,” Woolner said. “But there are spaces that could be possible, with the political will, and lighting a fire under other people about the urgency of this.”



The empty Farren Care Center.

rated to the point where it couldn’t be salvaged,” Woolner said. “But there are spaces that could be possible, with the political will, and lighting a fire under other people about the urgency of this.”

Getting the Word Out

The Franklin County Emergency Shelter, operated by ServiceNet on Wells Street in Greenfield, is the county’s sole congregate housing site. The shelter has 30 beds, and several sources interviewed by the Reporter said the waiting list is at least as long. Until 2013, the emergency shelter was located just around the corner from the Farren.

Local service providers estimate that 35 to 40 people are sleeping outside each night in Franklin County because they are unable to access shelter. In 2019, a couple was found dead in a tent near the

see VIGIL page A2

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Masks Required Until March in Montague

By JEFF SINGLETON

“I’m not worried about bed counts, and this and that. We’ve seen a huge uptick – there are some very sick people. Maybe if we mandate it people will take it seriously. The whole board agreed with that.”

The comment from John Zellmann, retired Turners Falls fire chief and current Montague emergency management director, at Monday’s selectboard meeting came in the midst of a discussion of state-level COVID hospitalization data and case counts. The cases, it turns out, are higher than a year ago, while the number of hospitalizations are lower.

The “whole board” referred to by Zellmann is Montague’s emergency management team, which includes Zellmann, town administrator Steve Ellis, police chief Chris Williams, and the town health director, Daniel Wasiuk. Although the emergency team apparently endorsed a town-



Public health director Daniel Wasiuk dragged a cart of notices down the Ave Tuesday.

wide mask mandate earlier in the day, Zellmann was virtually the only member to voice that opinion at the evening meeting.

Thus the unanimous selectboard decision to reintroduce a mask mandate after a six-week hiatus came as

something of a surprise. The board had rejected a mandate only two weeks earlier, instead imposing the requirement on town buildings but only issuing a “strong recommendation” for private businesses

see MONTAGUE page A7

New Funding for Lab at Heart of PFAS Fight

By SARAH ROBERTSON

AMHERST – “We live in the richest, most powerful country in the history of the world,” US Congress member Jim McGovern said at a press conference at UMass Amherst on Monday, standing in front of a trailer marked Mobile Water Innovation Laboratory. “Access to safe clean drinking water ought to be a right in every community. Yet, ten million households and 400,000 schools and childcare centers lack clean drinking water in our country. That is an outrage.”

The trailer on the UMass campus is part of the Water and Energy Technology (WET) Center, a research facility central to the ongoing effort to track and understand PFAS contamination in drinking water supplies across the state. The Center stands to receive new state and federal funds to expand its work.

McGovern said he advocated for

see LAB page A5



US representative Jim McGovern (left) and state senator Jo Comerford (right) spoke Monday at a UMass Amherst research facility studying pervasive pollutants.

Tech Program Focuses on Women in Trades

By CHARLOTTE VALLE

TURNERS FALLS - Tradeswomen of Tomorrow is a program within Franklin County Technical School created to encourage girls of their capabilities in all trades. The program was created in 2019 by current Advanced Manufacturing teacher Nicole Miller, along with another fellow alumna of the school.

The program was created to better expose the female students to other women within the trades, especially those in more traditionally male-dominant trades. The main goals, according to Miller, are to “bring awareness to good local jobs, and to encourage females that they are capable of any occupation regardless of their gender, and to also give them contacts in the trades.”

Each year the school hosts a panel for all female freshmen to attend. This panel includes a group of fe-



Women workers in the trades address Franklin County Tech freshmen girls during this fall’s panel, held outdoors in a tent.

male tradeswomen who have been working in multiple different fields.

These women come to the school to share their experiences, explain how they got to the positions they are now, and encourage confidence

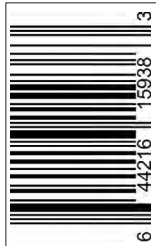
in young women who haven’t yet figured out what trade they want to pursue. (Freshmen will be asked to decide in the coming months which department to join.)

see TRADES page A3

Everyone Is Pretty Exhausted, Huh

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The Montague Reporter

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Technical Administration

About Face Computing

Founded by
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August 2002

VIGIL from page A1

Greenfield rotary; they were using a space heater to stay warm, and died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Woolner said she hopes Friday’s event leads to “some kind of interim, temporary solution,” whether at a new shelter or by making vouchers available for people to access hotel or motel rooms.

An earmark in a state bill passed last month grants \$25,000 from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the Center for Human Development “to support emergency non-congregate shelter and related re-housing needs for people experiencing homelessness in and around the area of the city of Greenfield.” Woolner said she fears this could take until February or March.

“Sometimes you just have to draw attention to things, and all of a sudden there’s more money,” said Kate Stevens, president of the Interfaith Council and a co-organizer of Friday’s event. “I think the word has gotten out a lot of places.” Stevens said sees the vigil as a “counter to the season of consumerism, consumption, and shopping.”

Immediate Needs

The Interfaith Council has been organizing memorial services and meals in Greenfield for people experiencing houselessness, and administers a fund that grants emergency housing aid to local residents in conjunction with the Salvation Army and Montague Catholic Social Ministries (MCSM).

“We did not have a lot of requests last year, because there was so much money coming out, and people were not being evicted,” said Amy Clarke, who serves on the

assistance committee. “But we’ve had different sorts of requests this year. We decided to put tires on a car, because the fellow was living in the car. There was someone fleeing domestic violence who could not get in a shelter for two days, so we put her up in a local motel.”

MCSM basic needs coordinator Mary Conway said she has been bringing two or three applications for emergency aid to the committee every week, and one or two to Community Action each month.

Conway pointed to an overall housing shortage as a root cause of the issue. “For the last four months, I’ve been working with a single man who has a Section 8 voucher,” she said. “For every apartment I’ve sent him to, there’s 30 to 40 people there along with him.... And the price of rent is going up.”

A couple of her clients, she said, are in the court eviction process. Conway applies to local groups for assistance because the state’s main pool of aid, the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), is so backed up that “it’s six to eight weeks before they’re even looking at people’s applications.”

Removing Barriers

Pamela Schwartz, director of the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness, explained the delays. “The overall pool of RAFT is shrinking,” Schwartz said. The state Department of Housing and Community Development is responding to the depleted resource by raising barriers to access the aid, and making payouts smaller.

“As of January 1, you can only

see VIGIL page A5



Michael Ketcham poses with a Zamboni ice resurfacing machine at the Collins/Moylan Arena in Greenfield. Ketcham is the facilities operator, and reports that the Greenfield ice rink is the nicest in the area, mostly due to properly maintained humidity and temperature. Skate there on weekdays between 2 and 4 p.m. for six bucks!

Letters to



the Editors

Misconception Debunked

Your article on Montague’s tax rate hearing for FY’22 (December 16, *Joy Ride; Tax Split; Used Cars...*, page A4) unfortunately perpetuated a fallacy about property taxes when it stated that “higher average valuations... [produce] lower tax rates but a higher actual tax bill.”

Many people think that if their home value goes up, their taxes will automatically go up, but that’s not necessarily the case. In Massachusetts, under Proposition 2½, higher average valuations produce lower tax rates, but whether tax bills go up or down depends on other factors.

At the hearing, it was suggested that the reason might be that excluded debt, particularly for the

new DPW facility, is coming online. Taking on excluded debt can certainly increase tax bills, but I’m not sure that’s the explanation here. The figures I’ve seen indicate that Montague’s excluded debt is actually slightly lower for FY’22 than it was for FY’21, so that should tend to make tax bills go down.

Figures given at the hearing show that Montague’s tax levy increased by 2.5% for FY’22, but residential tax bills are expected to increase by 4.4%. That suggests that the total for other classes of property – commercial/industrial/personal property, or CIP – will go down, maybe because average bills will go down, or because there are

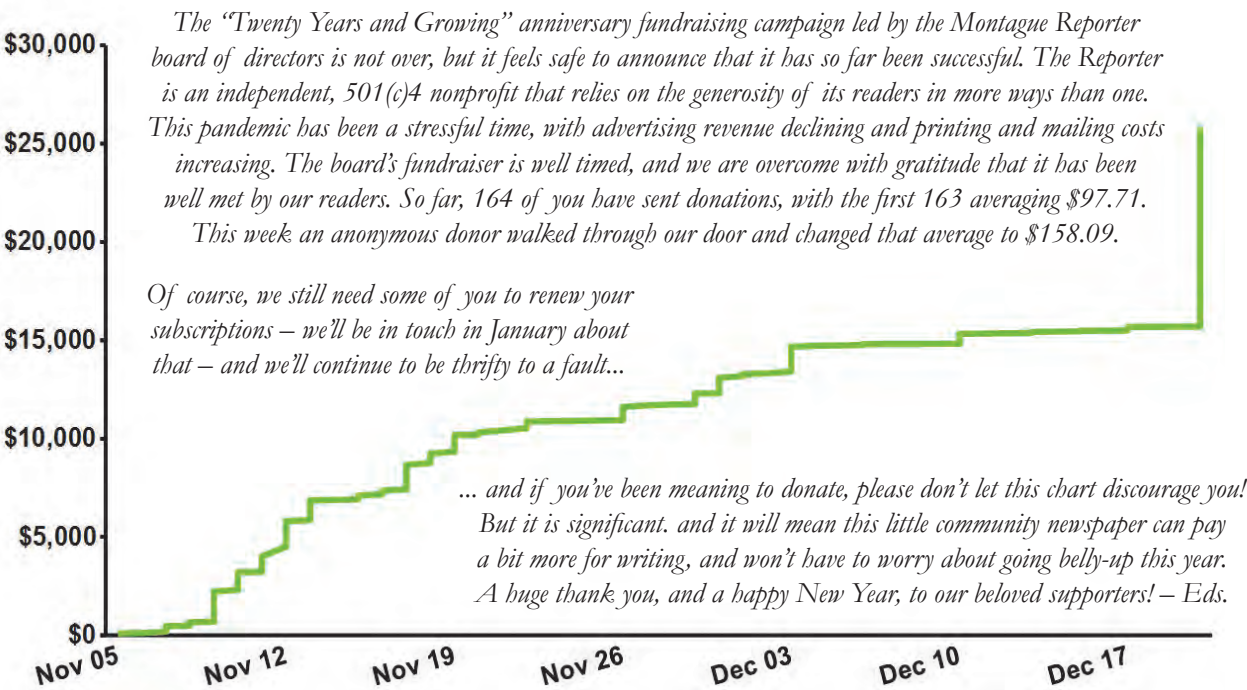
fewer bills to collect.

The tax recap sheets seem to support this, as they show that residential property taxes made up about 56.6% of the FY’21 tax levy, but 57.3% of the FY’22 levy. If residential properties are paying a bigger percentage of the total, average residential bills are likely to go up whatever average valuations do.

I’m not an expert, and it’s likely a bit of a puzzle to figure out exactly what is going on, but I’m pretty sure that “higher average valuations” by themselves are at best only part of the answer.

Mike Naughton
Millers Falls

Report: Anniversary Campaign



A Different Point of View On the Bridge Memorial

This is about the memorial plaque proposed for the Erving side of the French King Bridge. I have not yet read the draft written by Mariah Kurtz. The plaque is supposed to recognize those who have lost their lives to suicide, their loved ones, and the responders who provided assistance.

I think we are headed in the wrong direction for this memorial plaque. I do feel sorry for the people left behind from the suicides and the risks the first responders take.

If they want to put a plaque on the Erving side of the bridge next to the honorable Silvio O. Conte stone, it should be for all the brave

men who risked their lives to build the bridge in 1931-32. Those were tough times and they needed the dangerous work to put food on the table, and maybe a bottle of moonshine to get to the next day. Just imagine the impact that the achievement of the construction of this beautiful, award-winning bridge had on every resident and traveler in Western Massachusetts.

In conclusion, this plaque should be about the history of the French King Bridge rather than publicizing the negative aspects of it.

Frank Prondecki
Erving

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

There will be **no paper next Thursday**, December 30. The next one will be on January 6, 2022. Have a happy holiday and a happy New Year, everyone!

Thanks to the latest Coalitions Connections newsletter, I learned about the weekly **pandemic reports written by an epidemiologist** at yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com. Dr. Katelyn Jetelina translates the latest public health science reports for the general public. You can sign up to receive her easy-to-read weekly reports on the website.

This helpful and comprehensive newsletter also has lots of **resource-**

es for free meals and groceries, and ideas for things to do during the coming winter school break. Sled-ding, ice skating, museum passes, and other low-cost activities are all listed. There is also a section with resources for those battling depression and substance abuse during the holidays. Subscribe by emailing ilana@frcog.org.

The MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center sent out a warning about **Medicare equipment scams**. Beware of phone calls offering to send free medical alert systems, braces, or other equipment. The caller tells you they will bill Medicare and send you the equipment at no charge, if you just give

them your Medicare or social security number. Don't do it! Hang up and call 1-800-MEDICARE, or the consumer protection unit at the district attorney's office in Greenfield at (413) 774-3186.

The Arms Library is hosting a free **reading by poet Martín Espada** from his National Book Award-winning collection, *Floaters*. Espada will be introduced by poet and scholar Paul Mariani. A reception will follow the reading, and masks are required. The event is held at the Shelburne-Buckland Community Center, 53 Main Street, Shelburne Falls, on Friday, January 7 at 6 p.m.

Eggtooth Productions announces that Mr Drag and the Drag Sisters will be back for a **post-holiday variety show** with a theme of cock-tails, music, and merrymaking of all kinds. Lighten your heart by getting to the Shea Theater on January 7 and 8 at 7:30 p.m. for the show, "The Drag Sisters Underneath the Tree." Be masked, vaccinated, and thirsty.

FRTA has extended **free transportation on their fixed bus routes** through June 2022! Check out the routes on www.fрта.org. You may also self-schedule rides during the week and even on weekends with their mobile app or through their web portal, up to one week in advance, for \$3 to \$4 per one-way trip. Learn more on the website.

If you are having trouble applying for state-subsidized health

care, **health connector "navigators"** can coach you through this sometimes very confusing process! The Community Health Center in Greenfield offers this navigator service: call (413) 325-8500 ext. 146, or visit online at www.chcfc.org.

The **long-awaited Great Falls Market** is not officially open as of yet, but you may go inside and make a purchase if the door is unlocked and staff is there. In the softest retail opening ever, you might drop in randomly to say hi, and if there happen to be products on the shelves, you are welcome to exchange money for something – canned homemade soup, bacon butter, bone broth, dried pasta and bulk foods, even pastries and coffee. If seating is needed, a few chairs and tables are near the window for just such an occasion.

However, don't look for an "open" sign. The market prefers to remain in its liminal state for now, and those intent on finding coffee and pastry and a table with wifi in downtown Turners Falls may sometimes encounter a mirage here, there, and there, especially on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays.

Check the Great Falls Harvest Facebook and Instagram pages for news of a hard opening for the market. The big day will surely come around at 109 Avenue A, and we can't wait to celebrate it with owners Bridgette Chaffee and Chris Menegoni!

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

TRADES from page A1

The program will soon add a second panel for the upperclassmen who started in its first year.

I asked Miller if she has noticed any immediate effects of the panel regarding the confidence of the freshman girls exploring male-dominant shops. She told me that she has noticed that a lot of girls feel more confident to speak up and accomplish their goals without worrying about what they are and aren't capable of.

I got the chance to talk with some of the freshmen who attended the Tradeswomen panel hosted this past fall about their opinions on the program. I talked to Danielle Walker, Elise Wolfe, and a third student who asked that we not use her name.

I first asked the girls what they learned from the presentation. Walker told me that she learned "there are women within the trades that you can turn to; whether you need help or just someone to talk to." She also said that having these women around to talk to is comforting, as it provides support and understanding of her situation, where many people in the fields wouldn't be able to relate.

The panel also helped encourage confidence in all of the girls, especially those who want to join the fields at our school that are traditionally more male dominant. "It reminded me why I love that shop," said Elise.

The presentation caught the attention of the freshmen in several different ways. This includes things like the way that the women on the panel were genuinely excited to talk about their jobs – not only the encouraging parts of the trades, but

also their struggles and the ways that these women have stood up for themselves and overcome forms of gender discrimination in the workplace.

I personally attended the panel a year ago when I was a freshman. My experience was slightly different, as that year the meeting was held over Zoom. I did, however, find myself greatly encouraged by the number of people both my age and older, inside and outside of our school community, who were there to support the girls in my grade as we made our decisions.

The encouragement around me helped me feel confident to join my current shop, the Welding and Metal Fabrication program. Without hearing from other women about the struggles that they had overcome and how they dealt with different things, I don't think that I would have had the courage to officially join that shop, and I probably would have either joined a different shop or returned to my sending school.

During my conversation with Miller, she brought up that she encourages everyone to go into whatever trade they would like to be in.

"Don't get discouraged," she said. "The majority of people in each trade are going to be very good people and not a lot of people will give you a hard time. There's also always a lot of good supports out there to help with discrimination of any kind."

This is the first in a multi-part series exploring the Tradeswomen of Tomorrow program. If you or anyone you know are a woman working in the trades who would be interested in taking part in the program, feel free to reach out to Nicole Miller at nmiller@fcts.us.



GOOD TENANT

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AT LARGE

That's the Kind of Guy He Was

By CHIPAINSWORTH

TURNERS FALLS – When Dave Guilbault was on his way to being the Greenfield police chief, his younger brother would do ride-alongs in the patrol car. One hot summer day, dispatch called for backup at an apartment building near the fairgrounds.

“They were ready to take the guy in for arguing with his wife,” said Denis Guilbault. “He went inside, and I stayed in the cruiser.”

A few minutes later Guilbault returned, got in the car and drove to Sears on Main Street. He gave his brother \$400 and told him to go inside and buy an air conditioner. “We went back and he put it in for them, and told them if he had to come back he’d arrest him and take the air conditioner. That’s the kind of guy he was. There’s a million stories like that.”

The Guilbault family lived on L Street in Turners Falls, known as Slippery Gap because people liked to toboggan there in the winter. Their home was near the top of the hill close to the Togneri and Zukowski families.

“Our street numbers were 179, 183, and 185,” said retired Montague police chief Ray Zukowski. “They lived in a duplex, I lived in another, and Fran Togneri lived in the third. Me and Togger were five, and Dave was a year older. The neighborhood brought up the kids in those days.”

The boys played Wiffle Ball against the wall at the Montague Elks Club, and found ways to get into mischief. “Franny’s dad was a fireman, and they’d given him a bubble gum machine that looked like a firebox,” remembered Zukowski. “One day Dave and I were out riding our tricycles and saw a firebox on a telephone pole. We thought, ‘Let’s get some gum,’ and pulled the lever.”

Instead of gumballs they heard sirens. “Firetrucks pulled up and police cars, and one of the firemen came up and asked, ‘Did you boys pull the fire alarm?’ The rest of our day didn’t go too well. I always kidded Dave we might have been firemen if we hadn’t pulled that firebox.”

Guilbault, whose sense of humor was as big as his massive frame, had a penchant for practical jokes. One morning while the new Montague police station was being built, Zukowski got an



Dave Guilbault, playing in the Newt Guilbault league.

urgent call from the foreman. “Chief, we got big problems,” he said. “You’d better come on up.”

Zukowski high-tailed it over to the job site and saw a skeleton tied to the gate, together with a headdress and a bow and arrow and a sign that said, “Stop the carnage.”

Another sign said, “Save the Schell Bridge,” a poke at Zukowski’s sentiments about the rusted overpass near his home in Northfield.

“He was worried about protestors, but I just laughed and said, ‘Don’t worry, I know who did this.’ When I called Dave he said, ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about.’”

Growing up in Turners Falls, Guilbault was the town’s little league home run king and an Eagle Scout. Later he became a master scuba diver and a talented trombonist. He practiced martial arts and earned black belts in judo and karate.

During a trip to Prince Edward Island the two brothers became stranded out on the water. “My mom had sailboats. We were miles out and the wind died. He dove in and pulled the boat with a giant ray swimming beside him. He was fearless.”

When he was managing the McDonald’s on Federal Street in Greenfield, beat cops would stop for coffee and encourage him to join the force. It was an easier career choice in those days, said Zukowski. “I was eating supper one night and there’s a knock on the door. It was Red Hughes, the police chief. He said, ‘You’re a big kid – c’mon down, I’ll put you on the department.’”

“Dave followed a similar path. We’d have to take what they called the Brown Book exam. We trained on the job and went fulltime after we passed the Civil Service exam. That was in

1976 for Dave, and 1977 for me.”

Twenty years later Guilbault helped put away members of the Perry clan, who tortured and murdered Billy Paige in their house on Elm Street and dumped his body in a flooded New Hampshire quarry.

Around the same time, Don Maynard was shot and killed by two intruders after he’d come home from work for lunch. Guilbault and MSP investigator Paul Palazzo flew to LA and tracked down Maynard’s ne’er-do-well neighbor and his girlfriend, and brought them back to stand trial. They were both convicted of second-degree murder.

“He was very smart and he had a way about him where he’d be welcoming and always willing to help,” said Zukowski. “If you had a problem, you’d call Dave and he’d allocate his resources to help out. His intelligence carried over into the way he lived every day.”

Just as he blazed a trail for his brother Denis, who was nine years his junior, Guilbault took Denis’s son Cody under his wing. “In my younger days I’d go with Dave riding around in a blue Chevy Caprice,” Cody Guilbault remembered. “There was no censoring, no ‘hang on, little ears around.’ He lived near Friendly’s on Federal Street. We’d get ice cream and watch *COPS*, or eat doughnuts and watch Bob Vila’s ‘Home Again.’”

When there was trouble, Cody knew who to call. “He always had time for calm, cool, rational advice, but he wasn’t a guy you wanted to disappoint.”

Guilbault sponsored Cody and his wife Shannon for the police academy. They both worked for the Greenfield PD, and today are state troopers. “Dave didn’t want nepotism in the department, so he started his retirement process,” said Cody.

Guilbault was 56 years old when he retired in 2011. He died last month on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. It was a shock, said his brother, because you think you can depend on people like Dave Guilbault forever.

“Everyone who knew him – whether he put them in jail or not – they liked him,” said Denis. “He treated everybody the same.”

Chip Ainsworth writes sports for the Greenfield Recorder, and opinion and features for the Montague Reporter. He lives in Northfield.

NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

New Housing Explored on Montague Road

By GEORGE BRACE

Leverett’s final selectboard meeting of 2021 last Tuesday was a short one, with the board providing brief updates on the status of PFAS testing in the community and a potential affordable housing project, among other business.

Chair Julie Shively shared an update from the board of health on the town’s PFAS status. The Department of Environmental Protection has requested 30 additional wells in North Leverett be tested for PFAS in order to pin down the source of the “plume” responsible for contamination that exceeded state safety standards in several of the 38 wells that had been tested previously.

Subsequent to the meeting, board of health chair Michael Fair said he expected the results of the additional tests would be available to the state by the end of January.

Shively said there was no updated COVID-19 guidance from the board of health at the present time, but they were actively monitoring the situation.

The selectboard decided not to return to remote meetings, and

continue with “hybrid” meetings in which attendees can participate either remotely or in person. Board member Melissa Colbert, MD, said she was in favor of following Centers for Disease Control and Massachusetts state guidelines, which still allow for in-person meetings. Colbert said she felt the meetings were safe, “if we’re all vaccinated” and adhering to the town policy that masks must be worn.

According to Fair, contact tracing has indicated that the small number of infections recorded in Leverett recently were coming from contact with non-residents.

At the close of the discussion, the board acknowledged the unusually heavy workload for the board of health in the past year.

Real Estate

Shively gave an overview of a discussion held at a recent meeting of the affordable housing trust regarding a possible collaboration with the Jones-Cowls family to build both affordable and market rate housing on land owned by the family on Montague Road.

Shively commented on the lack

of available real estate for affordable housing projects in town, and said a suggestion had been made to explore the possibility of the construction of seven to nine housing units that would qualify as affordable housing on the property, along with a similar number of market-rate units.

Shively said drawings of an initial proposal provided by the owner showed the project was not likely to have a big visual impact, but noted that the proposal was “very complicated,” and a lot of work would be necessary to explore its feasibility.

Testing would need to be done to determine that the land would meet environmental regulations for that number of units, Shively explained, and that the financial aspects of the project would need to be explored further. “I think it’s worth pursuing,” she said.

Delta Gravel

Shively also reported on a recent meeting between representatives of Delta Sand & Gravel Inc. and a group of nearby residents who are concerned about noise coming from the company’s operation, in-

cluding the sound of chainsaws being used to clear an area of land.

Shively said the meeting was constructive, and another is scheduled for January, at which she hoped the parties would be signing a memorandum of understanding regarding the causes of the complaints.

Other Business

The board approved a request from the transfer station to hire a 15-year-old worker, provided proper work permits are filed, and provided that he is only permitted to perform labor allowed by law, which excludes the operation of some of the machinery at the station.

Board members were impressed by his resume, which stated he has been helping his parents with dump runs since he was six years old. Town clerk Lisa Stratford described him as a “seasoned professional.”

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis reported that preparation for sending out tax bills was almost complete.

The board approved the award of \$9,400 in Community Compact grant money to gather data on the needs of the town’s elderly residents.

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HICKS from page A1

shortly after 9 a.m. Hicks was at court with his wife and they sat two rows behind Vigliotti. He wore the same blue blazer and slacks, shirt, and tie that he wore during his previous appearance in late October.

The two stared straight ahead while the first two cases of the session were heard. The first involved violation of a restraining order that occurred when the defendant drove within 30 yards of the victim and

revved his engine. The case was continued, and the defendant was ordered to attend anger management classes.

The second case regarded negligent operation of a motorcycle that resulted in a crash on October 28. The defendant was given one year probation and ordered to pay \$900 in administrative and court costs.

Atty. Vigliotti's motion to allow exculpatory evidence was heard at 9:30 a.m. Hicks stood with his

hands folded in front of him. He appeared haggard and tired, and said nothing during or after Vigliotti's argument to the court.

Judge Connly said she would take the issue of law under advisement. The next court date at Northampton is scheduled for February 3. Hicks faces separate charges of indecent assault and battery in Greenfield district court related to incidents alleged by two additional accusers.



EPA Fines Lightlife for Acidic Sewage

By SARAH ROBERTSON

TURNERS FALLS – The owner of tempeh, tofu, and plant-based food manufacturer Lightlife Foods will pay a \$252,000 settlement to the Environmental Protection Agency for violating the Clean Water Act. The federal agency announced on Monday that the facility, located in the airport industrial park, failed to adequately pretreat its wastewater effluent, causing excessively acidic water to disrupt operations at the town's water pollution control facility (WPCF).

"It is a disappointment that the fines do not include a local mitigation provision that would divert necessary funds to help quantify and reimburse the costs to communities of violations," Montague town administrator Steve Ellis told the Reporter. "[W]hile to my knowledge a formal impact assessment is not available, one can reasonably surmise that such discharges have had an overall negative impact on wastewater infrastructure and plant operations."

To comply with the Clean Water Act regulations in the future, the factory installed a new pretreatment system earlier this year. Lightlife, founded in Greenfield in 1984, moved to Turners Falls in 1998 and was sold to agribusiness giant ConAgra two years later. It was acquired in 2017 by the Canadian-based Maple Leaf Foods as part of its plant-based division, Greenleaf Foods SPC.

"We are relieved that to our knowledge, no damage was caused by the instances of low pH wastewater discharge from the facility," Greenleaf Foods president Dan Curtain said in a written statement. "We are deeply sorry for any concerns this has raised among community members and we hope that our deployment of a new and effective water treatment solution reflects our company's commitment to protecting our environment."

Company representatives told the Reporter that they first became aware of the issue of "periodic low pH" in July 2019.

"We had been sampling our wastewater pH and felt confident we were complying when the matter was brought to our attention." Curtain wrote, explaining that after several months of monitoring and analysis, the company installed a temporary solution in 2020 and then permanent pre-treatment technology in February 2021. Curtain said the new system is working "extremely well" and allows the facility to constantly monitor pH levels.

Montague's WPCF superintendent Chelsey Little told the *Greenfield Recorder* that the facility had experienced processing issues in recent years, which the EPA investigated and traced back to Lightlife's effluent.

According to EPA investigators, the low-pH wastewater discharged from the facility was a result of lactic acid used to soak soybeans, and acidic cleansers used to sanitize equipment. Discharging overly acidic wastewater into a public sewer system can cause pipe corrosion and kill the bacteria used by the public treatment facility to break down organic matter.

"We remain productively engaged with Lightlife in an effort to ensure the continued awareness and monitoring leads to full compliance moving forward," Ellis said.

Past violations by Lightlife Foods, posted by statute on the Montague town website last year, include a failure to submit monthly reports on time between September 2019 and April 2020, and not reporting oil and grease limit violations in January and February 2020.

"We value the relationship we have with the members of the Montague, Massachusetts community where we operate one of our plants," the parent company wrote in its statement.

VIGIL from page A1

apply once you're behind on your rent, which has a really deleterious effect on your housing stability," Schwartz said. The maximum payout under the program is being reduced from \$10,000 to \$7,000, she added, and recipients can no longer automatically re-apply when the benefit runs out.

"The administration's response is to curtail [eligibility], as opposed to dipping into the over \$2 billion in federal ARPA funds that exist for precisely this purpose – to respond to the continuing COVID crisis," Schwartz argued. "It just doesn't seem to add up. Omicron is surging, and housing stability is as important as ever – [those funds] are depleted because people need them, in droves.... We are seeing a real rise in unsheltered homelessness."

Schwartz said that while funding for permanent housing is "on the horizon," thanks to earmarks in federal recovery bills, "we just have to deal right now with keeping people alive and safe, and not make more people homeless by cutting rental assistance."

On Monday, a coalition of 164 organizations ranging from social service agencies and tenant groups to the Massachusetts AFL-CIO delivered a letter to state officials urging them to reconsider changes to RAFT and the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which is also ramping down due to lack of funding.

"We are asking you to leverage resources that were provided to the Commonwealth specifically for COVID relief and continue to allocate these critical funds to households in need while minimizing bureaucratic barriers to obtaining funds," the letter read. "We must not allow the most vulnerable members of our community to suffer when we have the means to prevent it."

Whose Job Is It?

"This winter isn't going to be an easy one," said Mary Conway. "We need to do something, and figure it out. We have all these empty lots that could house a lot more people during the winter, but they're just sitting dormant."

According to Schwartz, experiments early in the pandemic with tent cities and temporary structures were largely viewed as unsuccessful, and a consensus emerged in favor of "non-congregate" sites such as motels. "You can have a certain level of privacy and dignity, and from there, you can access case managers and other support services you need," she explained.

Schwartz cited a 15-month study in Springfield that showed 52% of people accessing non-congregate housing programs were successfully rehoused into permanent homes, compared with only 16% of those who accessed traditional shelters.

"Of course, as things started to rebound, hotels became more difficult to access," she said. "What's happening in Franklin County is not unique.... It is a very deep crisis, and it requires a state response."

"Long term affordable housing is the answer," said Amy Clarke. "That's what we should be laser-focused on. But in the really short term – *tonight* – whose job is it to have a place open?"

"There's so many buildings in our community available, and closed," she added. "The Farren, without heat, is better than sleeping in the woods."

"I've told the story of 'no room at the inn' for many, many years," said Stevens, a former minister at Ashfield's First Congregational Church. "It feels important to me to be pointing out that we still do the same thing – we still don't have room in the inn."



LAB from page A1

the \$10 billion from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, signed into law on November 15, for PFAS detection and remediation nationwide. The legislation includes \$5 billion to help small and disadvantaged communities provide clean drinking water, \$4 billion to help utilities remove PFAS or connect well owners to local systems, and \$1 billion for wastewater plants.

"It is not enough given the enormity of the problem, but it is a damn good start that will make a real difference for a lot of people who right now do not have safe clean drinking water," McGovern said. "This is a big deal, and this center, at this university, is at the forefront of this important research."

The WET Center is working with the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to analyze and interpret data collected as part of a program to test drinking water for PFAS, in order to better understand the scope of contamination. Public water systems across the state are now required to monitor for the chemicals, and some private well owners have been offered free testing.

"It is without exaggeration to say that this WET Center, and the public health work being done on this university's campus, has completely changed my life and the way I interact with government," said state senator Jo Comerford, who chairs the legislature's joint committee on public health.

Designed to Survive

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, are a class of thousands of man-made chemicals used in products like nonstick pans, construction materials and fire suppressants. The emerging contaminant has been found in excess in water supplies in cities such as Westfield, where firefighting foam used on the Barnes Air Force Base leached into the groundwater.

"These human-made chemicals were designed to survive under extreme conditions, and they are very good at it," said research professor David Reckhow, who is leading the Center's work on PFAS. "They're compounds that nature has never seen before, and has almost no ability to assimilate."

Reckhow leads the group of doctoral, graduate, and undergraduate students at the WET Center helping to track contamination sources and research treatment options. He said the chemicals are not fully understood, but are used in many consumer products and can cause cancer, high cholesterol levels, and reproductive harm, and suppress the immune system.

PFAS contamination is showing up in some surprisingly rural areas. The Environmental Working Group estimates 1,500 wells nationwide could be contaminated with PFAS, affecting 110 million Americans.

Eighty-five Massachusetts towns where the majority of residents rely on well water have been



Equipment at the WET Center's main building, including a reverse osmosis machine (at right), is used to analyze PFAS and determine how to remove them from water.

offered free testing by MassDEP. A cluster of wells in North Leverett, several in Shutesbury, and one at the Swift River School in New Salem have all tested above the state's safety threshold of 20 parts per trillion (ppt).

McGovern, a founding member of the Congressional PFAS Task Force, hosted a livestream in July with Comerford about the threats posed by PFAS contamination. During the presentation a constituent of Comerford's, a pregnant woman from the North Quabbin area, said she was afraid her well contained PFAS, but she lacked the resources to properly address it.

"If her water source is found to be contaminated with PFAS, she has nowhere to turn," Comerford

said on Monday. "We don't have an answer for this young woman right now – whose life is on the line, whose baby's well-being is on the line.... We're all joining together to put this together, so that this beautiful building can be transformed to actually do the work it needs to do."

Somewhere to Turn

State funding for PFAS research will come from a \$1.5 million earmark that Comerford pushed for in the state's American Rescue Plan Act spending plan. Signed by governor Charlie Baker on December 13, the funding will help upgrade and expand the WET Center.

Comerford is also sponsoring a bill, "An Act restricting toxic PFAS chemicals in consumer products to

protect our health," that would set a timeline for the removal of PFAS from all consumer products sold in Massachusetts, including makeup, clothing, and furniture.

"It's no exaggeration to say that Massachusetts is leading the nation in this effort, and Senator Comerford is leading Massachusetts," Reckhow said. "Her bill to 'turn off the tap' may prove to be an historic step."

The Center is studying ways to treat and dispose of PFAS in water supplies. The complicated task is made harder by conditions at the facility, currently comprised of a small building and storage containers outside the campus's water treatment plant, and the trailer containing the mobile testing lab.

Started in the 1960s to address phosphorus, oxygen, and algae concerns, the Center was closed in the '80s, and reopened in 2015 to address new contamination concerns. "Most prominent among the new challenges, of course, are PFAS," Reckhow said.

About \$7 million in upgrades are planned for the facility, which several speakers at Monday's press conference described as "humble."

"If it were not for the work going on here at UMass Amherst, and at the WET Center in particular," McGovern said, "we might not know nearly as much about the dangers that these chemicals pose, the extent to which they are found in the water supply, and the solutions that we need to remove them permanently."



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MEDIA STUDIES

Local Drug Bust Articles Written By District Attorney’s Office

BY MIKE JACKSON

GREENFIELD – On Sunday afternoon Laurie Loisel, director of communications and outreach at the Northwestern District Attorney’s Office, emailed a press

release to local news outlets announcing a major operation of the district’s Anti-Crime Task Force culminating in criminal charges for 11 or 12 area residents. Loisel’s press release appears below, at left. A little later that afternoon an

item, bylined “Staff Report,” appeared on the *Greenfield Recorder* website. This article appears below at right. The *Montague Reporter* has highlighted the differences in cyan and magenta text. The item at right was next posted

to the *Athol Daily News* website at 4:21 p.m. and the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* website at 7:49 p.m. Sunday, still titled “Staff Report,” and linked to the three outlets’ Facebook pages. The same text was then printed in all three newspapers on Monday – in

all three publications, as a full-width banner headline across Page A1, bylined as a “Staff Report.” The three newspapers are owned by Newspapers of New England, Inc., headquartered in Concord, New Hampshire, and share editorial staff.

“Multi-agency investigation brings arrests in connection with cocaine trafficking operation”

Emailed: 12/19/2021 1:52 p.m.

GREENFIELD – After a seven-month investigation involving more than a dozen law enforcement organizations, police last week broke up an alleged cocaine trafficking syndicate that investigators believe distributed between 100 and 200 grams of cocaine a day through Franklin and Hampshire counties and the North Quabbin region. A dozen people from Greenfield, Deerfield, Montague, Ludlow, Charlemont and West Springfield were arrested in connection with the enterprise.

The investigation culminated Tuesday morning, Dec. 14, when members of the Northwestern District Anti-Crime Task Force coordinated the simultaneous execution of several search warrants seizing the alleged criminal organization’s stash of cocaine and other evidence. Arrested were two brothers, Brandon Rice, 35, of 114 Prospect St., Hatfield, and Daniel Rice, 38, of West Springfield, who are the alleged leaders of the trafficking organization.

Daniel Rice owns Dapper Dan’s Barbershop on Chapman Street in Greenfield, a location that was believed to be part of the alleged criminal operation. Each man pleaded not guilty in Greenfield District Court to charges of trafficking cocaine over 200 grams and conspiracy to violate the drug laws. Both men were ordered held on \$500,000 cash bail and their cases continued until Jan. 14, 2022.

The investigation worked to uncover the organized syndicate’s alleged members, methods of daily distribution of trafficking, weight quantities of cocaine, and locations of operation. Since Tuesday, police executed additional search warrants and made additional arrests in connection with the operation.

At 25 Keegan Lane, Greenfield, the residence of David Caplice, police recovered over a kilogram of cocaine. At 22 Arch Street, Ludlow, the residence of Jason Nadeau, police recovered approximately four more kilograms of suspected cocaine. Police allege that these five kilograms of suspected cocaine represent both the source of supply for Brandon and Daniel Rice’s cocaine trafficking organization and their local stash of cocaine intended for distribution throughout Franklin and Hampshire Counties.

As a result of the evidence gathered, the following individuals were arrested and arraigned on charges in Greenfield District Court:

- Jason Nadeau, 40, of Ludlow and David Caplice, 38, of Greenfield, on Tuesday each pleaded not guilty to charges of trafficking cocaine over 200 grams and conspiracy to violate the drug laws. Both men were ordered held on \$300,000 cash bail;
- Nathan Ortiz, 38, of Greenfield on Tuesday pleaded not guilty to charges of trafficking cocaine over 200 grams and conspiracy to violate the drug laws and was ordered held on \$100,000 cash bail.
- The following were arraigned on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday:
- Jason Byrd, 42, of Greenfield, pleaded not guilty to a single charge of conspiracy to violate the drug laws and is held on \$10,000 cash bail;
- Wayne Rockwood, 43, of Greenfield, pleaded not guilty to charges of trafficking cocaine over 18 grams and conspiracy to violate the drug laws. He was ordered held on \$3,500 cash bail;
- Heather Symanski, 31, of Greenfield,

pleaded not guilty to charges of trafficking cocaine over 18 grams and conspiracy to violate the drug laws, was ordered held on \$3,000 cash bail;

- Robert Blake, 46, of Greenfield, pleaded not guilty to a single count of conspiracy to violate the drug laws, was ordered held on \$3,000 cash bail;

- Rebekah Thompson, 37, of Charlemont, pleaded not guilty to charges of trafficking cocaine over 18 grams and conspiracy to violate the drug laws and was released on personal recognizance;

- David Gallegos, 28, Jaimilee Bontempi, 29, both from Deerfield and Damek Ryan, 37, from Montague, each pleaded not guilty to single counts of conspiracy to violate the drug laws and each was released on personal recognizance.

“I am extremely proud of the work of the task force on this case. To the people of our community that have complained about this activity, we hear you,” said Jeremy Bucci, Chief Trial Counsel for District Attorney David Sullivan. “The message should be clear that we have the capability, the experience, and the determination to target the highest levels of criminal organizations within our community. To the organized criminal syndicates that operate in this community: We have both the resources and the resolve to disrupt your operations and we fully intend to do so.”

Bucci and Northwestern Assistant District Attorney Joseph Webber are assigned to prosecute the criminal cases stemming from this operation. Spearheading the investigation beginning in May, 2021 were Trooper Daniel Paras of the Massachusetts States Police and Detective Jay Butynski of the Greenfield Police Department, both of whom are members of the Northwestern District Anti-Crime Task Force.

The task force sought and were granted dozens of judicial authorizations for warrants involving tracking surveillance ranging from the use of secret cameras, live cell phone location data, GPS tracking devices, and ultimately wiretap warrants to intercept communications between various members of the organization.

“Members of the task force worked tirelessly to follow, observe, and record important meetings and travel of the members of this alleged criminal syndicate,” said Bucci.

The investigation was led by the Massachusetts State Police Detective Unit assigned to the Northwestern District Attorney’s Office and drew participation from the following police agencies: Franklin and Hampshire Sheriff’s Departments; Greenfield, Montague, Deerfield Hadley, Athol, Orange, Belchertown, Easthampton police departments.

In addition, police personnel from these agencies assisted: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; Berkshire County State Police Detective Unit & Drug Task Force; Chicopee Police Department; Commonwealth Interstate Narcotics Reduction Enforcement Team; East Longmeadow Police Department; Hampden County Sheriff’s Department; Hampden County State Police Detective Unit & Narcotics Task Force; Hampden County Strategic Action & Focused Enforcement Unit; Holyoke Police Department; Homeland Security Investigations; Ludlow Police Department; Massachusetts National Guard; Massachusetts State Police Community Action Team & Shelburne Falls Barracks; Springfield Police Department; Westfield Police Department; West Springfield Police Department.

“DA: Multi-agency investigation brings arrests linked to cocaine trafficking operation”

Published: 12/19/2021 2:37:54 PM

Staff Report

GREENFIELD — After a seven-month investigation involving more than a dozen law enforcement organizations, police last week broke up an alleged cocaine trafficking syndicate that investigators believe distributed between 100 and 200 grams of cocaine a day throughout Franklin and Hampshire counties and the North Quabbin.

A dozen people from Greenfield, Deerfield, Montague, Ludlow, Charlemont and West Springfield were arrested in connection with the enterprise, according to the Northwestern District Attorney’s Office.

The investigation culminated Dec. 14, when members of the Northwestern District Anti-Crime Task Force coordinated the simultaneous execution of several search warrants, seizing the alleged criminal organization’s stash of cocaine and other evidence.

Arrested were two brothers, Brandon Rice, 35, of Hatfield, and Daniel Rice, 38, of West Springfield, who are the alleged leaders of the trafficking organization. Daniel Rice owns Dapper Dan’s Barbershop on Chapman Street in Greenfield, a location that was believed to be part of the alleged criminal operation, the DA’s office said.

Each man pleaded not guilty in Greenfield District Court to charges of trafficking cocaine over 200 grams and conspiracy to violate the drug laws. Both men were ordered held on \$500,000 cash bail and their cases were continued until Jan. 14, 2022.

The investigation worked to uncover the organized syndicate’s alleged members, methods of daily distribution of trafficking, quantities of cocaine and locations of operation, the DA’s office stated.

Since Dec. 14, police executed more search warrants and made additional arrests in connection with the operation.

At 25 Keegan Lane in Greenfield, the residence of David Caplice, police recovered more than a kilogram of cocaine. At 22 Arch St. in Ludlow, the residence of Jason Nadeau, police recovered about 4 kilograms of suspected cocaine.

Police allege that these 5 kilograms of suspected cocaine represent both the source of supply for Brandon and Daniel Rice’s cocaine trafficking organization and their local stash of cocaine intended for distribution throughout Franklin and Hampshire counties.

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“I am extremely proud of the work of the task force on this case. To the people of our community that have complained about this activity, we hear you,” said Jeremy Bucci, chief trial counsel for District Attorney David Sullivan, in a prepared statement. “The message should be clear that we have the capability, the experience and the determination to target the highest levels of criminal organizations within our community.”

Bucci and Assistant District Attorney Joseph Webber are assigned to prosecute the criminal cases stemming from this operation.

Trooper Daniel Paras of the Massachusetts States Police and Detective Jay Butynski of the Greenfield Police Department, both of whom are members of the Northwestern District Anti-Crime Task Force, led the investigation that began in May.

The task force sought and was granted dozens of judicial authorizations for warrants involving tracking surveillance ranging from the use of secret cameras, live cellphone location data, GPS tracking devices, and ultimately wiretap warrants to intercept communications between various members of the organization, according to the DA’s office.

“Members of the task force worked tirelessly to follow, observe and record important meetings and travel of the members of this alleged criminal syndicate,” Bucci said.

The investigation was led by the Massachusetts State Police Detective Unit assigned to the Northwestern District Attorney’s Office and drew participation from the Franklin and Hampshire county sheriff’s offices, and the Greenfield, Montague, Deerfield, Hadley, Athol, Orange, Belchertown and Easthampton police departments.

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MONTAGUE from page B1
open to the public.

The board of health, which had failed to reach a decision about a mandate earlier in the month, canceled its meeting scheduled for Wednesday December 15 amid skyrocketing positive COVID cases.

Wasiuk, who had apparently supported the mandate earlier in the day, did not address the issue during his discussion of the town's latest COVID metrics, which showed higher numbers of positive tests over the past two weeks than during the same period last December.

Michael Nelson, a member of the board of health and an employee of the state health department, said he had been "going back and forth" on the mask issue for several months, and that without better guidance from the state, "we're just treading water."

Nelson noted challenges with enforcing a mandate, but also said that masks "clearly help the hospitals, which are being overrun." He said that he himself had been wearing masks "everywhere," but the issue had become "incredibly politicized."

"To be completely honest," Nelson concluded, "I don't care at this point."

Resident Ariel Elan said she understood Nelson's point, but recommended a mandate without "active enforcement." She described a recent trip to Cumberland Farms where only two out of nine customers were wearing masks, an experience she called "stunning."

Selectboard member Matt Lord indicated he supported a mandate, but wondered if there was anything the board can do to "facilitate information from getting out to people." "We need to put some oomph behind it," he said.

Earlier in the day, the *Reporter* had reviewed the frontage of various businesses open to the public in downtown Turners Falls. Of 31 storefronts, five required masking inside, three had posted selectboard announcements that were out of date, and only two posted the most recent town guidance. The other 22 had no information posted about mask policy within their doors.

During Monday night's discussion, the state came in for a lot of criticism for failing to give cities and towns more forceful guidance on the matter. "The decision is on little selectboards and boards of health and emergency management groups, and not really where it belongs," said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz.

Kuklewicz said he "suspected" that there would be "an item on the agenda in December of 2022 [about] COVID updates."

On Tuesday morning governor Charlie Baker, announcing new measures to address the statewide COVID spike, said he had "no interest" in issuing another mask mandate. While the state imposed a mask mandate last year, there are now "other tools" to protect people, such as vaccines, Baker said.

The approved motion puts the mandate into effect from this Wednesday until March 1, 2022. The relatively lengthy time frame was justified as a response to concerns about frequent changes in mask policy during the past year, and a desire to put the issue to rest during the coming winter.

Ellis said that the town will receive approximately 2,700 rapid COVID test kits purchased with a state grant. He said the emergency management team had decided to use a distribution system "quite similar to the one Greenfield is putting in place."

Ellis said the "stated purpose of the grant is to make the kits available to people who are "economically disadvantaged" through "numerous organizations that are really close to the populations of interest."

Solid Waste
The selectboard awarded a contract for the hauling of "sludge cake" produced by the town's water pollution control facility (WPCF) to New England Waste Services of Maine, Inc., popularly known as "Casella" after its president, John W. Casella. WPCF superintendent Chelsey Little said the contract would only be for one year, to see how the facility's new dewatering press will perform.

"I hate to be the bearer of bad news," Little said, "but the contract price is over double what we pay now." She said the price tag would be "up to \$342,000."

Ellis noted that the contract is split over two fiscal years "so we will only experience half the impact in the present fiscal year."

Little also discussed plans to reduce sludge hauling through an expanded composting program. She said the engineering firm Stantec had completed plans for two sites, one near the main facility in Montague City and the other near the transfer station on Sandy Lane.

Little was asked about compost and sludge testing requirements to identify PFAS, a group of potentially dangerous, long-lasting chemicals that have mysteriously appeared in groundwater in the region. She said that the last quarterly test of the WPCF's outgoing "biosolids" showed "non-detect in all areas of PFAS."

Little said the facility is only required to test for six of the numerous PFAS chemicals, and that she "did not foresee [state or federal officials] limiting disposal options for sludge, because they are well aware of the issues that a lot of facilities have."

Under Our Feet
The board authorized the disbursement of \$140 to the Berkshire Design Group for oversight of the Shea Theater sidewalk project, and \$1,500 for ground penetrating radar prior to beginning construction.

"Call this lessons learned, and put into active effect," said Ellis, referring to the Spinner Park restoration, which was delayed and over budget due to the discovery of unknown unknowns just below the surface. "The lesson we learned from Spinner Park is that there are undocumented utilities under various areas in our streets," he said.

The funds for the radar work will come from the Unexpected Engineering Account.

Other Business
Ellis gave the selectboard an update on commitments that have already been discussed for spending approximately \$2.4 million in federal COVID relief funds. He said that \$550,000 had "already been committed," and that "current capital requests and grant match" to town meeting could total "another \$1.5 million."

The board, he noted, had expressed an interest in having a "community conversation" about the priorities for the spending, and he asked if that should occur at a special meeting devoted to that purpose or at a regular meeting.

Board members indicated they would like to have the discussion at a regular Monday meeting, starting early and lasting up to an hour. Ellis suggested January 24.

The board discussed potential dates for a winter special town meeting, and landed on Thursday, March 3 as a tentative date for an evening virtual meeting.

A motion to allow businesses that hold on-premise liquor licenses to remain open until 2 a.m. on New Year's night was approved by the board, as was a very long list of annual licenses for local bars, clubs, restaurants, and liquor stores.

The board approved a Chapter 30B purchasing agreement with Northeast Roof Consultants to assess the condition of eight town building roofs, and a purchase and sale agreement for the parking lot on Sandy Lane, being sold by the town to Judd Wire.

Ellis alerted the board that a "request for qualifications" for proposals being funded by cannabis impact fees would be sent to "selected community-based providers" in January.

At the end of the meeting, the board retired to two executive sessions to discuss "potential litigation" and real estate negotiations. The next scheduled selectboard meeting will be on Monday, January 3.



LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on December 22, 2011: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Wickman Defends Her Tenure as U-28 Super

"We are a different organization, and a lot of change has happened in the last five and a half years," said Union 28 superintendent Joan Wickman last week.

As Erving senior citizens moved furniture and materials out of the first floor senior center into their brand new \$2.2 million building, just up the road from the recently renovated Erving Elementary School, Wickman spent an hour in her drafty offices on the second floor of the old elementary school on Pleasant Street in Erving, ticking off the accomplishments of her tenure and defending the school superintendency union against charges of excessive spending and opaque bureaucracy that have been mounting in some member towns.

Wickman said since she was hired to replace Linda Driscoll in July of 2006, she has succeeded in reorganizing the central office, consolidated the special education secretary position, hired a well respected director of finance and operations to replace Charlie Paulin, updated policies and kept the member school districts informed and in compliance with ever changing state and federal legislation, regionalization proposals and mandates regarding public schools and small school

districts in particular. Under her tenure, the work of the six staff members in the central office has been reorganized so that the financial staff are now supervised by the manager of finance and operations.

Dodge Tapped for Staff Sergeant

"It will be a tough decision," said selectboard member Pat Allen. "We have a very strong department, made up of very thoughtful people who have a lot of experience and a lot of dedication to the community."

But in the end, the Montague selectboard had to pick from the three candidates who applied from within the police department to fill the post of provisional staff sergeant and from the four who applied to fill the post of provisional sergeant.

The vacancy in the staff sergeant post was created when Chris Williams was promoted to the position of acting chief of police, on the retirement of Ray Zukowski last month.

Promoting up the chain of command, the board gave the provisional staff sergeant job to sergeant Chip Dodge, and moved detective Lee Laster up to the vacant sergeant's position. These appointments will take effect on January 1st, and will remain in effect until the civil service exams and the process of hiring a permanent chief, staff sergeant and sergeant are completed later in 2012.



ANALYSIS

Bank Robber Still at Large

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – There is no new news to report to our readers about the robbery at the Greenfield Cooperative Bank on Avenue A in Turners Falls last Thursday, December 16. "I wish I could tell you more," said Montague police chief Chris Williams, who declined to comment while the crime was under investigation.

An employee at the Turners Falls bank also declined comment on the robbery, and would not even answer general questions about training policies for bank employees.

We can report that Williams did not indicate any suspects have been taken into custody, and that investigators are "looking at a lot of film" from the bank and other security cameras in the area. Last week the *Greenfield Recorder* reported that the robber was wearing a "grey hoodie," and presented the classic "note" demanding money, but did not display a weapon. No one was harmed.

So here are a few recent statistics from the FBI and other sources on bank robberies, which are generally a federal crime under a 1934 law.

- Bank robberies appear to have spiked in the 1990s and at the turn of the new millennium, a phenomenon one study attributed, in part, to the proliferation of smaller branch

banks during that time. But they have declined rather precipitously in the past two decades, for reasons that are not entirely clear.

- According to data published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, there were 7,465 robberies of federally insured commercial banks and similar institutions, including savings and loans, credit unions and armored car companies, in the United States in 2003. The number dropped to 5,500 in 2010, and by 2018 had fallen to just over 3,000.

- The decline appears to have continued during the recent pandemic, with only 1,788 robberies listed for 2020. The rather striking reduction in bank robberies contrasts sharply with the rise in the national murder rate during the pandemic, a phenomenon which has garnered a good deal of press attention, and speculation.

Ben Craigie, vice president for professional development at the Massachusetts Bankers Association, in an email to the *Reporter*, attributed the decline to "innovations in hardware and technology that have made financial institutions more secure and investments in people through training, internal resources and community initiatives..."

Craigie also told the *Reporter* that "it is our hope that robberies continue trending downward in future years to a point where they are non-existent."

Well, between 2003 and 2020 the number of robberies in Massachusetts had declined from 307 to 70, according to the FBI data, which seems to be heading in the right direction.

Wall Street Journal reporter Jack Nicas, in a 2013 *NPR* interview, also attributed the decline in bank robberies, which the paper called the "quintessential American crime," to better training and technology, but he also hypothesized that potential robbers may be doing a kind of cost-benefit analysis:

"Well, bank robberies are a high risk, low reward crime. It's very likely that a bank robber is going to get caught, according to police. And, you know, last year, bank robbers just took about \$7,600 per bank robbery. Now, compared to about 15 years ago, they were taking nearly \$12,500 per robbery. So it's just not worth it to them in some cases. And also, coupled with the fact that from the comfort of their own home, for some of the more sophisticated criminals, they can rob some of these banks and some of these customers just right from their computer."

A good analysis, but perhaps not terribly comforting when you are being handed a note demanding money. The FBI data for 2020 recorded only one death as a result of a bank robbery, that of a "perpetrator."

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GILL from page A1

While the station has been free for users since it was activated last February, it saw minimal use before September of this year, and consequently, the town was being charged “between \$2 and \$6 per kWh usage” by Eversource, said Brown.

Whether the station is used or not, Brown said that it costs the town “about \$80 a month” in basic charges, plus a \$54.83 monthly fee for its ChargePoint software. All told, the station has cost the town about \$2,100 so far, Brown said.

“We had focused on the kWh costs and the monthly charges,” added Booth. “The demand charges have completely taken us by surprise.” He and the other commission members decided that charging a dollar per kWh would discourage use of the station, and reduce the town’s monthly cost.

Other EV charging stations in the area charge between 20 and 30 cents per kWh, and there are also several free charging stations in Greenfield at Big Y, Stop and Shop, and the municipal lot between Chapman and Davis streets.

Both Brown and Booth said that the town was not given full information about Eversource’s rate structure prior to the EV charging station installation. “We think the rate structure is outrageous,” said Brown, but the town is in the first year of a five-year contract.

Selectboard member Randy Crochier said he felt the charging station should remain “at a usable rate,” but regretted having the station installed when it is costing the town more than expected. He agreed with Brown and Booth that Gill did not know “everything we thought we would know,” but owns it now. “Like anything else,” he said, “if it is not used, is it going to work when we want it to?”

“It is a public service, and I think we should try to look at it positively that way,” said Booth.

The energy commission will reconsider their recommendation of the fee, and will return to the selectboard with a decision.

Police Cruiser Replacement

Town administrator Ray Purington told the selectboard the town’s insurer has approved a \$52,613 settlement for the replacement of the 2017 police cruiser destroyed in a crash earlier this month, and that police chief Christopher Redmond had found a hybrid 2021 Ford Interceptor cruiser to replace

it. “It will be black instead of blue, but I think we can live with that,” said Purington.

Purington said the cost to the town would be about \$3,500 more than the insurance settlement, “right around what the state bid difference is for a hybrid instead of a gasoline model.”

Purington’s recommendation to authorize a purchase order and use up to \$5,000 from the Northfield Mount Hermon donation account was unanimously accepted.

The damaged cruiser’s front light package still needs to be evaluated for potential insurance coverage. If the lights are not covered, Purington said, then the equipment will be transferred from the damaged vehicle onto the new vehicle.

Asked by Crochier if a gasoline engine model was available, Purington said he believed that only the hybrid was available.

“I am sure that, knowing Redmond, he will salvage whatever he can off of the old vehicle,” said board chair Greg Snedeker. “He is always very good about that.”

Asked by Crochier if there was a timeframe for having the new cruiser in service, Purington answered that while the vehicle itself is “readily available,” a backlog in “all of the accessories that have to go on it” makes a delivery date uncertain.

Other Business

“The numbers are essentially unchanged,” said Purington about the FY’22 sewer rate increase, compared to a presentation at the board’s December 6 meeting. “We are in decent shape.”

“It is a lot better than we were a few years back,” added Crochier.

The board approved Purington’s recommended 1.5% increase for FY’22, bringing the effective rate to \$0.3278 per cubic foot, for an estimated yearly total of \$191,020.

Cielito Lindo’s food concession trailer license renewal for 2022 was unanimously approved, as were car dealer licenses for A-J Cycle Shop, Arrow Auto Sales, Atlantic Wholesale, Doug’s Autobody, TEK Cycle, and Town Line Auto Repair.

Schuetzen Verein was approved for its liquor license renewal, with Crochier recusing himself due to his club membership. The Gill Tavern’s pour license and the Spirit Shoppe’s full liquor license were renewed, as well as the beer and wine license at 23 French King Highway, or The Mill.



NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Still No Takers from Montague For Open School Committee Seat

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – One hundred and forty minutes into Tuesday evening’s meeting of the Gill-Montague regional school committee, chair Jane Oakes reported that no volunteers had stepped forward to offer to fill a vacant seat from Montague, and that it would remain a “standing item” on the school committee agenda.

“We have not received any letters of interest as yet to fill the seat,” said Oakes. “I think that is indicative of how people in general are feeling about being overburdened with so many things that are expected of everyone. It’s hard to think about taking up one more thing.”

The committee is still meeting via Zoom, and the new wave of COVID-19 sweeping the community hung over Tuesday’s meeting. Superintendent Brian Beck reported that the basketball game that evening had been postponed after players on the opposing team tested positive for the virus.

Beck also noted that the Helping Hands Committee and Athletic Leadership Council, who have been collecting non-perishable food at the games, have raised enough to help feed 25 local families during the holidays.

The school committee unanimously approved a proposal to increase the rate substitute nurses are paid, from \$25 an hour for a seven-hour day to \$200 per day. Beck said this rate was “fairly competitive” with other local schools, and that the proposal was an effort to ensure the district remains staffed during nurses’ planned leaves.

The committee heard a presentation Beck called “a bit of good news,” a look at learning recovery efforts in reading in the elementary schools. Director of teaching and learning Jeanne Powers gave a presentation on a coordinated approach among the schools to monitor students’ skills and offer targeted interventions.

“Anecdotally, we have heard of students making multiple years of growth in reading since the start of the school year,” Powers said. For-

mal assessment in January and February will provide hard data.

Montague member Cassie Damkoehler shared, anecdotally, that a child of her own at Sheffield Elementary has recently tested at grade level in reading for the first time ever. “That’s awesome!” said Powers. “It’s the teachers. They’re really digging in.”

Updates from each of the schools about behavioral issues and social-emotional problems students are facing were grimmer.

“This has been the roughest start to the school year,” said Sheffield principal Melissa Pitrat. “They’re definitely pushing to see what they can get away with.”

Hillcrest principal Sarah Burstein, in a written report, said the youngest students were having difficulty managing disappointment and in “basic friendship skills.” “The needs continue to grow as the pandemic continues,” she wrote. “We need to fill vacant positions that are key to providing support.”

Beck gave the report from the secondary schools, saying that at the high school academics were of higher concern, but that at Great Falls Middle School there has been an “increase in the number of students struggling with social-emotional issues” leading to a “significant number of incidents.”

“These factors have compounded one another,” said Beck, adding that challenges in staffing “key positions... makes it difficult to develop consistent and trusting relationships with students.”

Compounding the problem, he said, was earlier access to social media granted to youth by their caretakers during the pandemic.

Two interns from the Smith College School for Social Work and a substance abuse counselor hired using Montague cannabis impact fee money, he said, were helping on the ground, as was support for teachers in managing their own stress.

Discussion turned to the lack of an alternative school in the region, and Beck told the committee that the school resource officer contract with the town of Montague would be up for review this winter, so

more conversation about that position is expected in the coming weeks and months as the towns and district create their FY’23 budgets.

Business manager Joanne Blier said that the Hillcrest and Sheffield elementary school buildings, which belong to the town of Montague, will require “millions of dollars worth of repairs over the next five years just to get them up to standards,” which will shape capital improvement requests to that town.

A request passed along by Beck from the Montague finance committee for an additional meeting this year prompted a strong response from longtime Montague member Michael Langknecht.

“The town tells us how they want us to spend, and we build our budget around that. I’m curious about how that would change for the better?” he asked. “We’ve been working very closely with them for years and years and years and years on all of this.”

Langknecht said there is an open invitation for town selectboard and finance members to attend school committee meetings.

Jennifer Waryas, who sits on both committees, clarified that the request was not related to a separate suggestion that the towns and district review the “affordable assessment” method used to shape the budgets. “I’m clearly missing something,” she said. “There’s no change of process.”

Gill member Bill Tomb pointed out that the process of presenting and accepting budgets is written into the district contract, and would be difficult to change in any case.

Oakes and Gill member Timmie Smith suggested the “civic leaders” meetings, inviting officials from the towns and districts to meet and brainstorm, should be revived despite the pandemic.

The school committee’s next meetings are on January 4, 11, and 18, with the middle meeting being a special “working” session to discuss the preliminary budget.

Montague residents interested in serving can contact the superintendent’s office. “It doesn’t have to be for a whole year,” Oakes said.

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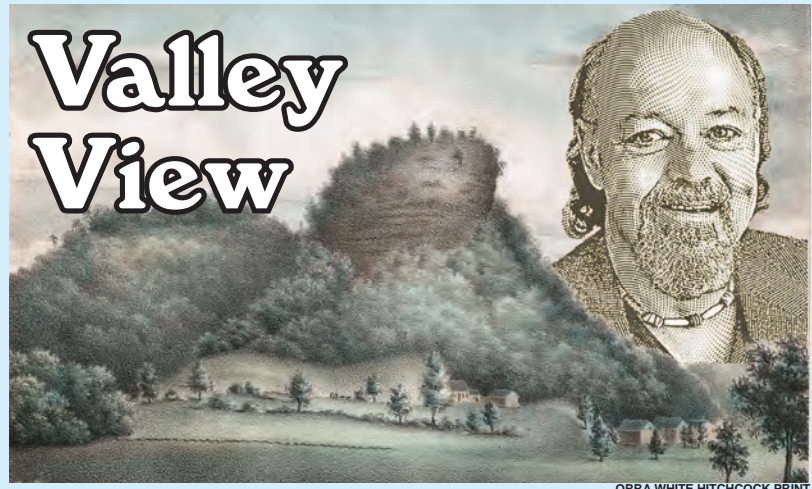
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Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*

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FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER DECEMBER 23, 2021



By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – One never knows where a road will lead them. Especially an old road. So, let’s talk about roads. Old roads. Ones that began as indigenous paths or, before that, game trails carved into Mother Earth’s skin by migrating herds. The discovery potential in such ancient trails is nearly limitless for those who maintain an open mind and harbor a curious spirit.

I learned that roads could tell fascinating stories during my brief days as a young surveyor still searching for my identity. That was back in the late Sixties and early Seventies, when I rose in status to transitman before moving on to other adventures. It all began with summer jobs as a high school and college student, when I learned the skills of a rodman, a job description that may well have changed today with all the new technology. I don’t think surveyors still use plumb bobs and 200-foot chains, standard tools of the trade in my day.

Back then, a good rodman was a valuable commodity. He was a man who knew the woods and understood terrain features valued by mapmakers. Though I didn’t know of any female rodmen when I was cutting line and giving backsights, I’m sure there are many today.

In those days of turning angles on circular Gurley transit scales, the rodman was a laborer who carried a sharp machete to cut sight lanes for the transitman, lugging and pounding in hubs and stakes to identify traverse stations along the perimeter. During detail work with a boldly calibrated 16½-foot rod in hand, the rodman would record contours along with natural and manmade features.

Among the natural features were brooks, springs, swamps, outcroppings of ledge, and distinctive trees. The manmade items include roads, stone walls, cellar holes, old wells, and buildings. All of this information was recorded in field notes and submitted to office draftsmen who drew maps and plans of the surveyed acreage.

Although many of the roads we marked through forested hilltown terrain had been long ago discontinued or abandoned, they needed to be recorded nonetheless. These roads passed through and bordered

expansive old New England farms that had been worked by the same families for several generations and were about to go on the market. Remarkably, many of those roads were then and likely still are today fit for travel by four-wheel-drive trucks and recreational vehicles, not to mention navigable by dirt- and mountain-bikers, hikers, hunters and snowmobilers.

Unfortunately, many of the old four-wheel-drive roads I explored as a teen and young man are now sealed off by sturdy, locked metal gates erected to eliminate all but “official” motorized travel by forest stewards and departments.

I guess it was inevitable once recreational rough-riders came onto the scene. They loved to rev their muscle trucks and spin their big, knobby, mud-splattering tires through boggy depressions while displaying total disrespect for private property. The problem was only exacerbated by inconsiderate gangs of four-wheeler enthusiasts who cut fences and new forest trails. Some even disassembled narrow openings in stone walls for their recreational vehicles to pass through. This raised the ire of landowners, and resulted in many road closings.

Carving Deep History

I can’t say I was aware as a young surveyor that some of the old roads I marked on detail duty – even discontinued portions of old county roads that had been rerouted over the years – had originally been Native paths.

I suppose it’s possible that some astute party chief introduced me to the deep-history context of some roads. If so, the memory escapes me. But it most likely never happened. Too esoteric for the average modern surveyor. No, it seems to me that I employed my own idiosyncratic, autodidactic methods to arrive at that profound and exciting discovery that puts a different spin on old roads.

There is now a sophisticated cult of true believers who promote the idea that some stone walls and mysterious stone structures hidden on landscapes predate 16th-century European emigration by a long shot. Although it’s possible some were indeed Indigenous creations, see **VALLEY VIEW** page B4

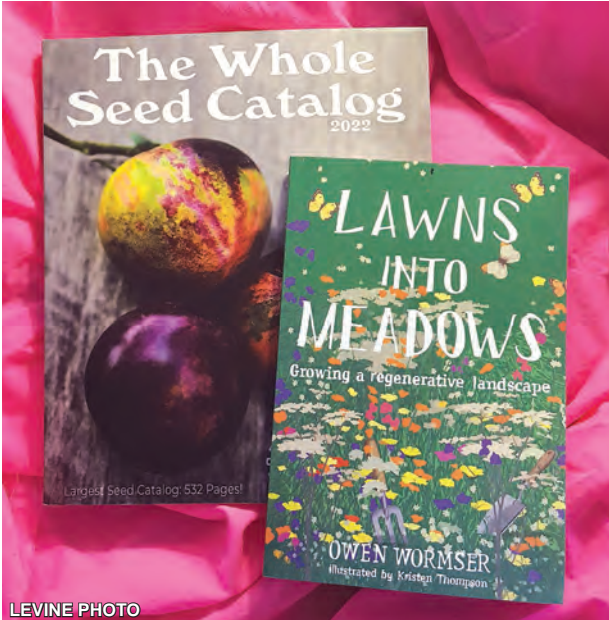
GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By ANNABEL LEVINE

TURNERS FALLS – Thank you all for spending another year reading our monthly Great Falls Apple Column. We spent our 2021 writing hours getting serious, and silly, and hopefully inspiring some of you to eat some weeds, swap some lawn for gardens, and lay down some new community ties.

Now, just like most of our edible perennial friends outside our doorsteps and in our parks and public tree belts, this column is going dormant for the winter. We are hoping to get in quite a few chill hours (Apple joke – if you know, you know!) during January, February, and March, in order to give ourselves a better start for the upcoming growing season. We will be popping our heads out of our hibernation dens once a month to host a monthly free table, and we’ll post those dates in Local Briefs when they are finalized.

I thought it would be fitting, then, to use today’s column space to recommend some wintertime reading for when you miss our wild edible proselytizing and garden photos. These recommendations are my own, and I tried to pick a range of genres to entice a variety of readers. We are lucky to have some great independent booksellers in the area, so if you do set out to purchase



The author has several recommendations for reading material over the dormant winter months.

any of these please make sure to buy them locally.

My first recommendation is *The Farm in the Green* see **APPLE CORPS** page B8

Musings From the Blue Recliner A Different Christmas Evening Star

Jerry “Jinx” Collins is a Turners Falls native whose memoirs we have excerpted from in a number of previous editions. Collins describes a local tie to the tragic sinking of the troopship SS Leopoldville on Christmas Eve, 1944, an event whose details were kept secret for many years.

By GERALD COLLINS

TUCSON, AZ – It’s hours before dawn on December 6, 2021, and as happens with greater frequency as

the years go by, I again find myself sipping a cup of coffee while sitting in my blue recliner, staring into space around the room in front of me. For some unknown reason, my eyes focus on the long rectangular table behind the living room couch in front of me, which acts as a separation between the great room and my musing space. Lined up on it, between two large brass reading lamps, is a row of books that I peruse on occasion when I feel in need of some sort of spiritual uplifting.

My gaze comes to rest on one particular book that would normally not be considered spiritual. *A Night Before Christmas*, written by Jacquin Sanders (Buccaneer Books, 1993), is a memoir of a World War II event that has multiple references of prayers going up to God in it – but not the usual kind associated with the birth of Christ. It’s about the tragic sinking of the SS Leopoldville, a converted Belgium cruise/cargo ship used to ferry troops

see **STAR** page B5

THE AUTHORS’ CORNER: JENNIFER LYNN BARNES

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

TURNERS FALLS – Happy Holidays! I recently finished reading *The Inheritance Games* by Jennifer Lynn Barnes. I almost instantly fell in love with this book, and I am so happy to review it.

The Inheritance Games is about a seventeen-year-old girl named Avery Kylie Grambs. Avery is very poor, and just lost her mother. She is very, very curious, and amazing at solving mysteries and riddles, like her mother was. Avery and her mother would play a game every week they called “I Have a Secret,” because her mother insisted that everyone should always have at least one. Avery was always very, very curious, and skilled at solving mysteries, and at deciphering clues.



Our correspondent with her latest read.

Then Tobias Hawthorne, a popular billionaire whom Avery has never even met, unexpectedly dies, leaving her almost his entire estate and possessions. The only complication is that Avery has to live in his mansion – filled with secret passages, see **AUTHORS** page B3



C. CARMODY COLLAGE

“WINTERBERRY”

Meet Winterberry, a gorgeous senior lady who wowed the staff from the moment they met her. She arrived at Dakin via a friend of a friend, so there’s no information about her background. What is clear, though, is that she is a sweetheart through and through. She made a graceful exit out of her carrier, looked to the staff for pets, and rubbed her head into their hands. Too cute!

Winterberry likes to explore, and has lived with another cat. Se-

nior cats come with a lot of perks. They have the wisdom and experience that kittens don’t have. You won’t find them hanging from your chandelier, or climbing your drapes like Mount Everest.

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Surviving Breast Cancer

By Julie Cunningham

Part 15: Recovering Slowly

By JULIE CUNNINGHAM

AMHERST – Recovering from cancer treatment isn’t a linear experience. Hair comes back slowly, and different at first; eyelashes and eyebrows come in at their own pace, and skin takes a bit to get back to what it was. I’m going to talk about an experience I had recently that was difficult, but I think is telling on two counts: many people don’t really understand what it’s like to have gone through treatment, and many treatment and cancer survivors don’t really understand the emotional and physical toll it has taken.

I was casually talking to a man I had met online on Facebook. I find Facebook is the best online dating website, because you get an in-depth look at the other person’s life. I can look back years at all of their photos and life events, and they can do the same with me. You know what you’re getting, basically. I’ve met quite a few people that way and I find it works for the most part.

This man – we will call him C – was a trucker in Hampden County. Now, not really my type, but I’m trying to be more adventurous. C and I were getting along and we were talking a lot. All of a sudden,

he sent me a photo I had posted on social media about three years ago. I didn’t recognize it. The hair, the glowing skin. I didn’t see myself in the photo so I asked, innocently, “Who is that?”

I started a storm of accusations from this man, who had apparently been “catfished” before. He accused me of stealing my own identity, basically. He made threats I couldn’t talk him out of, and he was on a war-path. I begged him to stop threatening me and to let it go. His response was to turn it around on me.

I’ll skip the semantics, but I had to send him a photo of myself without my wig to get him to see, even though I had called him and talked with him on the phone to explain and I had shown him photos of my pathology report and very detailed and personal documents about my diagnosis. I never got the apology I deserved after I proved that I was who I said I was, which I should not have had to do.

The lesson here is clear: *Do. Not. Beat. Up. On. Cancer. Patients.* It’s not your job to protect us from ourselves. It’s not your job to protect us from you. It’s not your job to be a hero.

I think this man had a hero com-

plex and was in some sort of delusion, but what he really accomplished was managing to hurt a very vulnerable cancer patient even further. We are vulnerable and fragile, and we feel far removed from the days before we knew about our diagnosis. We don’t necessarily understand right away what it means, or how it has impacted us. We don’t want to admit to ourselves how it has aged our skin years in the period of just a few months.

If you’re dating a cancer survivor, be patient with your accusations. Take time to learn about what it means before you go off. Try to understand what we are going through. Do not do what this man did to me. It isn’t a crime to have cancer.

This is, admittedly, the third time I’ve walked right into abuse from someone who is a good person overall, but can’t properly stomach a cancer diagnosis. I’ve coined the term “Magoo-ing around” to describe blindly walking into a situation where I’m about to be emotionally hurt without suspecting it, because I’m still getting used to how people react to my diagnosis.

You really have to be more careful with someone who has survived cancer. It’s just a fact. It’s different for us.

Montague Community Television News

Watch TV, or Make TV

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Montague meetings are up! Find the most recent selectboard meeting, as well as the finance committee meeting from December 15, on the MCTV website.

All MCTV videos are available on the MCTV Vimeo page, which can be found linked to the MCTV website, montaguetv.org, under the tab “Videos.”

All community members are welcome to submit

their videos to be aired on Channel 17, as well as featured on the MCTV Vimeo page.

MCTV is always available to assist in local video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for checkout, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

Something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment. Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or infomontaguetv@gmail.com.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

ArtsHub Summit Coming in January

GREENFIELD – The ArtsHub Virtual Summit: How to Recover and Thrive invites emerging and established artists, performers, arts managers, and those in creative fields to join in a week-long series of virtual interactive workshops, training, and networking sessions scheduled January 10 through 14, 2022. The summit is designed to provide tools to help those working in creative fields recover from the disruption created by the pandemic and learn how to position their business to thrive as the economy recovers. There will be daily sessions with guest speakers at 10 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m.

The ArtsHub Virtual Summit sessions were created in response to surveys, focus groups, and conversations with artists and arts leaders. The sessions will feature talks by experts in various fields, presenting topics such as Public Relations 101, How to Use TikTok to Be Seen, How to Use Your Data, How to be Seen and Get Found Online, and more.

The closing session, at noon on Friday, January 14, will focus on

Building Momentum: Building the ArtsHub. Participants will be invited to join committees, give feedback on the first phase of the ArtsHub, and share what they want to see going forward, according to Dee Boyle-Clapp, director of the Arts Extension Service at UMass Amherst and ArtsHub co-coordinator.

The aim of the ArtsHub website project is to create a Western Mass database of creatives and cultural venues. “You can’t succeed if you can’t be found,” said Lisa Davol, marketing manager at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and co-coordinator of the ArtsHub. “One of the goals of the new ArtsHub website is to provide a comprehensive list of BIPOC and all other creatives in the region to promote and connect them with each other and with those looking to purchase or hire.”

“The ArtsHub will be officially launched at the ArtsHub Virtual Summit and includes feature articles on the region’s artists and organizations, resources such as grants and calls for public art, places to post opportunities such as rehearsal

space for rent or studio space wanted, arts calendar, and much more,” Boyle-Clapp explained.

This is being done through a partnership with New England Foundation for the Arts’ (NEFA) CreativeGround database. Dee Schneidmann of NEFA will lead one of the ArtsHub Virtual Summit sessions with a focus on how to get listed in the new ArtsHub online directory, and how the listing will increase visibility for artists and their work.

The fee for the ArtsHub Virtual Summit is \$35 for the early bird registration before January 4 and \$55 after. The fee provides access to all sessions and online access through January. A full schedule and links to register can be found at umass.irisregistration.com/Site/ArtsHubSummit.

A limited number of scholarships are also available for artists and creatives from Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties. Complete an online form and submit it no later than January 2. To apply, and for more information, visit www.umass.edu/aes/artshub.

Senior Center Activities

DECEMBER 27 to JANUARY 7

WENDELL

Wendell Senior Center is open for a foot care clinic the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. Senior Health Rides are now available. Contact Susan von Ranson at (978) 544-3758 to set up a ride.

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for drop in visitors. For more information call 863-9357.

Monday 12/27

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Knitting & Needlecrafts Circle

Tuesday 12/28

10 a.m. Knitting Circle
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 12/29

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Bingo
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 12/30

10 a.m. Chair Yoga
1 p.m. Cards & Games

Friday 12/31

11 a.m. Chair Exercise (Canceled)

Monday 1/3

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Knitting & Needlecrafts Circle

Tuesday 1/4

3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 1/5

9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent Hours
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
11:45 a.m. Chair Exercise

Thursday 1/6

1 p.m. Cards & Games

Friday 1/7

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise

ERVING

Erving Senior Center is open 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. No lunch will be served. We will continue with Brown Bag the first Thursday of each month. For any questions or concerns, please call Paula at (413) 423-3649. Mask required if not vaccinated.

Mondays

9 a.m. Re-Store & Re-Emerge
10 a.m. Tai Ji Quan

Tuesdays

9 a.m. Good for YOU
10 a.m. Line Dancing

Wednesdays

9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning
10 a.m. Tai Ji Quan
12:30 p.m. Bingo

Thursdays

9 a.m. Re-Store & Re-Emerge
10 a.m. Stretch & Balance

Fridays

9 a.m. Quilting Guild

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held on Zoom on Wednesdays. For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 5, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

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SCENE REPORT

This Little Light of Mine

By JERI MORAN

MONTAGUE CENTER – Olive told her parents, Addie Rose Holland and Dan Rosenberg of Real Pickles, that she thought a lantern walk around town would be a great way to welcome the Winter Solstice. And her little town, Montague Center, seemed to agree.

More than 60 people with lots of kids met at the village center and walked Tuesday night, with the Town Common Singers providing musical accompaniment. Egg nog was promised at the end.

It was a wonderful way to “visit” neighbors while practicing social distancing and having a celebration amidst the winter cold and health concerns.

*Top:
An invitation.*

*Middle:
“Hard when it is dark and people are on the move,” our photographer reports.*

Bottom: Gathering on the Common, as the longest night began.



Early Worker; Bank Robbery; Stuck Goat; House Fire; Shouting; Shooting; Building Condemned In Patch

Monday, 12/13

9:09 a.m. Passerby reporting a one-car accident on the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge due to slippery conditions. PD unavailable due to a call in Montague Center. Shelburne Control advised and sending Gill PD to handle it.

11:10 a.m. Caller from Ja'Duke states that a male party in a hoodie keeps riding around on the school's property on an electric bicycle and looking into the windows. Area checked; unable to locate.

11:20 a.m. Caller states that a dark SUV keeps going to an Avenue A address and meeting up with a resident there; believes that this is drug-related activity. Referred to an officer.

Tuesday, 12/14

12:47 a.m. Caller reporting noise disturbance in Holyoke. Caller transferred to Holyoke PD.

5:56 a.m. Alarm company requests police dispatch to 253 Pharmacy; monitoring company advises there is a vehicle parked on site, but the location does not open for another three hours. Officer spoke with male party, who provided proper documentation of his employment at the involved location; he was going in to work for 6 a.m.

10:34 a.m. Walk-in requesting to speak with an officer about a family gravesite being vandalized.

11:12 a.m. Caller would like it on record that someone broke into her locked vehicle while it was

parked in the Third Street public lot overnight and stole the ashtray.

6:42 p.m. Request for marked vehicle to Green Pond Road for a transport to the station. One male party was arrested and charged with conspiracy to violate drug law.

Wednesday, 12/15

3:17 a.m. Alarm company requesting police dispatch to Brick and Feather Brewery. No keyholder responding at this time. Officer advises all appears secure; no issues; however, there is a locked gate and area he is unable to get to.

3:42 a.m. Officer reporting vehicle stop on Avenue A with two attached plates and suspended registration. Tow requested. Summons issued for operating a motor vehicle with a revoked license, subsequent offense; operating a motor vehicle with a suspended registration; and attaching plates to a motor vehicle.

5:07 a.m. Caller reports icy roadway on Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. Officer and MassDOT advised.

7:22 a.m. Officer requesting DPW come out to clear up a large trail of mulch in the road on Ninth and L streets.

12:17 p.m. Officer following up with Food City manager about a possible fraud issue.

2:13 p.m. Animal control officer advising they stopped to check the well-being of a small dog on Millers Falls Road who was supposedly left outside too long.

3:48 p.m. Caller reporting two-vehicle accident near Carroll's Market; no injuries or fluids reported. Shelburne Control advising they also received a call and that they are dispatching TFFD. Officer advises TFFD does not need to respond. Citation issued.

10:12 p.m. Out with task force in Third Street parking lot. MPD officer transported one party to Greenfield PD.

Thursday, 12/16

10:42 a.m. Food City employee states that a female party just shoplifted and left; requesting officer to attempt to identify female on security footage. Unable to locate female.

11:48 a.m. Employee of Greenfield Cooperative Bank reporting that they were just robbed; male left in attached vehicle. Be-on-lookout issued. Officer attempting to make contact with vehicle owner. One party detained; vehicle located on Burnham Street, unoccupied. Units established that attached vehicle was the wrong vehicle. Officers checking hair salon, Strathmore, Rist Insurance, and the Gun Rack for video footage.

4:13 p.m. Report of someone having a fire at Peskeomskut Park. Area checked; no fires.

5:10 p.m. Report of suspicious male party pacing back and forth in front of a Davis Street address. Gone on arrival; may have been looking at Christmas light decorations.

5:36 p.m. Report of male screaming obscenities on the Fifth Street bridge. Area searched; male party gone on arrival.

Friday, 12/17

12:13 a.m. Caller states she hit a deer on Union Avenue on her way home. She was able to drive home; upon arriving home, she noticed significant damage to her car. Accident happened in Sunderland. Caller advised to contact Sunderland PD.

10:40 a.m. Report of a goat stuck in a fence at the park on Station Street. ACO en route.

11:58 a.m. Caller from Turnpike Road reports that the house across the street is on fire. Officer reports one person still in house; requesting road be closed from Dell Street to Christopher Avenue. DPW contacted. Shelburne Control requesting numbers for the building inspector and wiring inspector. Road reopened; officers clear.

12:33 p.m. Report of kids skateboarding down the hill on Fairway Avenue. Officers are tied up at this time.

4:18 p.m. Caller reporting an injured squirrel on the side of Taylor Hill Road.

4:21 p.m. 911 misdial. Caller trying to make an appointment for his COVID booster shot; he meant to call 211, the state information line. No emergency; not in any distress.

7:43 p.m. Shelburne Control requesting unit assist with Gill PD for an evaluation at a motor vehicle stop on the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. Services rendered.

Saturday, 12/18

3:54 p.m. Caller states there are kids riding up and down Randall Wood Drive on dirt bikes, quads, and a go-kart. Caller concerned they are going to get hit. Officer checked area; unfounded.

10:10 p.m. Caller from Central Street states that there is a lot of yelling and screaming from an apartment and the kids have started crying. Female states it was just her kids being loud; no argument was occurring.

Sunday, 12/19

5:51 a.m. Walk-in reports a “spike” from the General Pierce Bridge coming out of it. Caller states he is concerned that it may puncture a tire. MassDOT advised.

7:30 a.m. Caller advising that his truck slid off Deep Hole Drive and has minor damage. Report taken.

10:56 a.m. Walk-in states that while she was out walking her horses, a male was shooting an automatic rifle less than 150 feet from the road. When she asked him to stop, he kept shooting. Officer spoke to involved male; he will change his shooting location on his property.

Monday, 12/20

1:03 a.m. Caller reports hearing yelling from across H Street; states noise seems to be coming from inside and outside. Officer advised.

8:28 a.m. Shelburne Control advising of a disabled vehicle on the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge causing a traffic problem.

3:47 p.m. Caller reports seeing a fancy white car and a black SUV on Avenue A; appeared to be drug activity. Referred to an officer.

6:21 p.m. Caller states that she works with the landlord and they are working with the Board of Health regarding a property on Eleventh Street being condemned. There was a sticker and some papers on the door, and they have been ripped off. Caller requesting officer to respond and clear the building. Officer advises that a perimeter check has been completed and the building appears to be secure. Caller advised to contact Board of Health tomorrow.

AUTHORS from page B1

and with the entire family he has just mysteriously disinherited – for a year.

Avery has absolutely no idea why she of all people was left a billionaire's entire estate and possessions, and to make everything much worse, almost everyone in the Hawthorne House, as Tobias Hawthorne's twisted mansion is called, wants Avery killed, due to the fact that Tobias Hawthorne disinherited his whole family for her.

Avery is introduced to Hawthorne's four grandsons, Nash, Grayson, Jameson, and Xander, who are very charming, and perfectly mysterious. Her encounters with the rest of the Hawthorne family are, unsurprisingly, not as rosy; a couple of Hawthornes are openly discussing challenging the will which says that Avery is the heiress, and one of them even threatens that she won't last a week in the Hawthorne House.

I fell in love with *The Inheritance Games*! I love love love mysteries and romances, and *The Inheritance Games* includes both.

I also love all the characters, especially Tobias Hawthorne's grandsons, so much. They are all so different from each other. Nash Hawthorne, who is the oldest, is a cowboy, and claims to not care about his inheritance of the estate at all. Grayson Hawthorne is basically perfect: he dresses fancily, always in suits, and is on a perfect track for being very, very successful. Grayson had also always expected to be the heir of his grandfather's

establishment, the Hawthorne Foundation, which Avery inherits.

Jameson Hawthorne, my favorite out of the Hawthorne brothers, is a daredevil. He is very charming and mysterious, and is also set on solving the mystery of why his grandfather left almost his entire estate to a seemingly plain stranger.

And Xander Hawthorne, the youngest, is amazingly genius and friendly, and seems to be perfectly fine with Avery inheriting basically everything. Xander is also especially witty; he loves engineering and tinkering with machines, and most all of them end up amazing, but not without damage done to Xander himself.

“I made it down one hallway,” Barnes writes, “and was turning toward another when Xander Hawthorne popped out of a nearby lab, holding what appeared to be a mechanical dragon... ‘You look like you could use a robotic dragon,’ Xander told me. ‘Here.’ He thrust it into my hands.

“‘What am I supposed to do with this?’ I asked.

“‘That depends on how attached you are to your eyebrows.’ Xander raised his one remaining eyebrow very high.”

I also love reading about Tobias Hawthorne's estate! It is filled with secret passageways and unique rooms, including a spa, a couple of magnificent libraries, ballrooms, a hidden stairwell, secret rooms behind paintings, mirrors, etc. The Hawthorne House and its surroundings sound absolutely amazing and mystical; Avery even compares the estate to

Hogwarts, the popular castle from *Harry Potter*:

“I stopped breathing, just for an instant, as I crossed the threshold,” Avery says. “It was like stepping into Buckingham Palace or Hogwarts and being told that it was *yours*.”

I also love, love, *love* all the little comparisons in *The Inheritance Games*. It makes me so happy when a book references things that I know of or like, because it makes fantasy books, or unrealistic books, seem more real, which is so magical! My favorites are the fairytale-esque references.

I especially like the one where Avery compares her new life to a dark, twisted, fairytale: “On my way to a ball, I should have felt like a fairytale princess, but my horse-drawn carriage was an SUV identical to the one that... [had been] side-swiped this morning. Nothing said *fairytale* like an attempted assassination.”

I also love this one earlier in the story, when the announcement of Avery's mysterious inheritance makes her extra-popular and influential: “You'll be the leading story on every newscast, the number one trending topic on all social media. To some people, you'll be Cinderella. To others, Marie Antoinette.”

The Inheritance Games is such a perfect story for me! It's a love story, which I always love, and it is filled with dark secrets and mysteries to unravel. If you decide to read *The Inheritance Games*, I hope you love it as much as I do. Happy Holidays!



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VALLEY VIEW from page B1 I'll reserve judgment for now. I need to know more, must see unimpeachable evidence that isn't based on bare speculation and hypothesis. As old Muskie used to say in the Saturday morning cartoons, "It's possible," an assessment that applies to many mysteries.

What brought me to this topic of old roads and antiquities is my recent, perhaps pandemic-driven, probe into the history and settlement of South Deerfield and north Whately. This sliver of the Connecticut Valley is my place and that of my father's family. We have been here since the colonial beginning – a short time on the deep-history scale – and were led here by 17th-century Indigenous trails, including the so-called Pocumtuck Path.

This local trail, which connected Old Deerfield to Umpanchala's Fort on the edge of Hatfield, was already thousands of years old when found by my European ancestors. It ran through Hatfield and Whately as

we now know them on Straits and Long Plain roads, then traveled right through the heart of South Deerfield on Main Street, and on to Mill Village Road and Old Deerfield through the Bars and South Meadows.

So important was this meandering north-south Native path – on which the Bloody Brook Massacre unfolded on September 19, 1675 – that it was established as the dividing line between the eastern and western layout of the May 20, 1688 Long Hill Division. This land division allotted parcels in the south end of town to 48 Deerfield proprietors. Then, some 70 years later, after years of passing through, the nascent village of Muddy Brook, now South Deerfield, was born.

Underneath it all to this very day, up and down Main Street, is that same Pocumtuck Path, buried under layers of gravel and asphalt.

Furthermore, that main artery was just one tiny segment of a well-defined network of Native trails that served as the foundation

of Whately, Conway, Ashfield, and all settlement of Franklin County townships. Though there is little mention of such trails in the public record, they were here when colonials first entered the valley, and they were followed far and wide into the wild, ultimately determining the settlement pattern of our county. I know that was the case near my Greenfield Meadows home, and the same was true of the home I sold in South Deerfield. The dynamic exists throughout the surrounding hills and dales, ridges, and swamps I got to know as an observant and curious hunter passing cellar holes, old mill sites, and abandoned orchards along fading roads buried deep in the forest.

Up Into the Hills

One of my favorite haunts, with or without a gun, has for more than 50 years been the forested acres surrounding Conway State Forest and Henhawk Trail. It's a broad swath of upland landscape that touches Williamsburg, Whately, and Conway and Ashfield not far away. This mixed forest of splendid hardwood ridges and foreboding hemlock swamps is traversed by many double-rutted roads, barely discernible today.

The best time to find such old roads, often with a small, indistinct cellar hole or two along them, is after a fresh, shallow snow that reveals their outline. Thus, I most often discovered such roads with gun in hand during deer season. The ones that don't appear on early maps must have been private roads to secluded upland farms, abandoned long ago for the more fertile Ohio Valley and beyond.

To learn about this local landscape, I used to study pre-1940 topographical maps, which showed the old orchards, pastures, and

farms. There and in town histories published at the turn of the 20th century I'd gather information and build a new level of understanding.

In the process, I learned that Henhawk had been an ancient Indian trail leading to Ashfield, the upper Deerfield River Valley, and beyond. During colonial days it had evolved to a cart path, and eventually became a main road for motor cars between Whately, Williamsburg, and Conway that was used into the World War II era.

It made sense. Our hunter-gatherer Native people, before and after they became farmers of corn, beans and squashes, would have carved paths through their sheltered, upland, winter refuges. There they maintained sugar orchards, nut groves, and berry patches which served two important purposes: producing wild food and attracting important game that also valued it as a food source. This network of well-defined upland trails also led colonials to food, water and observation points, and were thus followed by scouts and adventurers who eventually built their first dwellings on home sites requiring minimal clearing.

Under the Pavement

The same was true in early Muddy Brook, now South Deerfield, and likewise in settlements along the periphery. We're talking about Mill River, along West Mountain, and Pine Nook along the Connecticut River, places also located along well-established Native paths that soon became roads.

The same can be said for East Whately, Whately Center, West Whately, and Indian Hill, where the first roads were all former Native paths – roads like Mount Esther, Grass Hill, Dry Hill, Poplar Hill, Chestnut Plain, and Whately Glen,

where Leicester miller Adonijah Taylor was, according to Deerfield town records, working on the road to Conway from his Indian Hill grist and sawmills soon after settling there in 1760s. Take it to the bank that the road he was opening followed the same Native path that had led him to his new home and business.

Deeds seem to indicate that South Deerfield's Pleasant Street – which today passes the elementary school, and wasn't connected to North Main Street by a bridge over Bloody Brook until the 1830s – was a Native path, forking west just north of the bridge where Bloody Brook Monument now stands. It also seems more than likely that Elm and Sugarloaf streets had a history as at the very least secondary Native paths from the Connecticut River to the uplands.

Like their long-abandoned upland tributaries traversing hilltown forests, the narrow Native footpaths pressed into the largely wet, fertile bottomlands had been here for thousands of years by the time they were first trekked by colonials. Over time, these paths were widened for horses and horse carts. Later still for motor cars.

So, when passing through downtown South Deerfield today, be aware that those ancient Native paths are underfoot. It's a deep-history perspective that can take you to places exciting to visit.

We must never forget that from these paths governed by the lay of the land was born a town, a county, a state, a region and, two centuries later, the United States of America – a deep-history perspective that's easy to get your head around. It's too bad the proud, dignified people whose moccasins laid the groundwork were denied a seat in council reinventing their defiled place.



MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN

Bridge of Flowers, A Soft Day's Night

(ESP-Disk LP, 2021)

MYSTRA

REVIEWS #6

Review by JOSH B.

TURNERS FALLS – Not sure where to start with this one, as I have known the Bridge of Flowers quite a while, and have even helped release some of their CDs, etc. The expectations were high on this end, as I know how good they can be... But, am glad to report that yes, this LP is great.

The first song might be my favorite on the album, as you are launched deep into their world – and what a world it is. BOF is unique at sounding old and new – this is really a hard thing to do, by the way, but tried every day of the week – and also at sounding both “classic” and “avant.”

At first they might just sound rough around the edges, but they are actually achieving a tough, deep simplicity... kind of a noise rock haiku kind of thing. At times you can be waiting for things to get crazier or it to branch out, but I think that's the point. Like, *get used to this*. It's similar to Creedence Clearwater Revival, or some of the better '90s bands. BOF boil things down to their essence, down to what rock music should be: a zone to tap into, and get your life into a cool and different pace.

They are wild, yet strangely positive, and not polished at all. And they are blowing past the normal barriers with this release, pushing into new frontiers where things are not where they usually are. Maybe this will be too much for some people, but a lot of the best art is like that. It challenges and inspires, and years later people catch on.

I think this album is like that, and personally, I like it right now too, on this weird rainy day. It's bringing me out of the past-zones where I usually prefer to focus and into the now. And it's making me remember there really are still some good bands around!

I know I haven't really described the music much. BOF can be compared to Jonathan Richman, or The Fall, or '90s bands like early Pavement, but not in a way that they are copying any of these. Their sound is really deep on this record, with a big drum sound set high in the mix. That sound helps them with their unique orbit.

I should also mention that I think the B-side is my favorite right now. The A-side is a little like jumping into the middle of the vortex! But heck, the whole thing is amazing. Keep it up, guys.

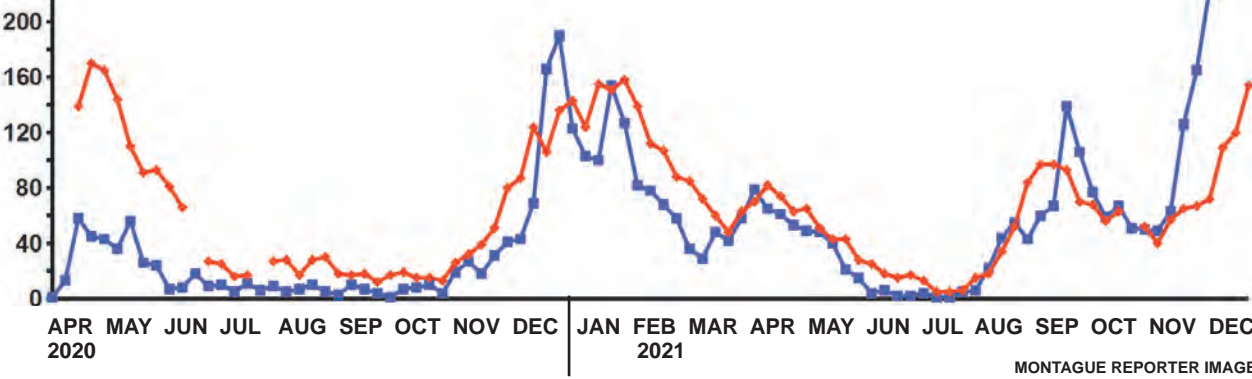
COMPARISONS
FRANKLIN COUNTY WEEKLY COVID-19 CASE COUNT & BAYSTATE HEALTH COVID-19 HOSPITALIZATION COUNT
THRU 12/22/21 (sources: MA DPH and BAYSTATE HEALTH)

With the current spike in positive COVID-19 tests many are attributing to the arrival of the Omicron variant – an unconfirmed hypothesis – and given the protection afforded by vaccination, a number of our readers have given us the feedback that we should no longer be printing charts of case count alone, and that hospitalization is now a better measure of the pandemic's relative impact.

The blue line on this graph reflects the weekly case count for Franklin County, according to the Department of Public Health. 356 cases were officially counted here within the last week, as compared with the peak of 190 last mid-December.

Severe cases are transferred from Baystate Franklin to Baystate Medical Center in Springfield. Baystate reports daily on the total in-patient COVID count at its four hospitals. The red line shows this figure. On Monday it reached a peak of 154. Exactly one year earlier (December 20, 2020), the count was at 156.

Last week, Baystate Health president Dr. Marc Kerouack warned the system was beyond capacity. On Tuesday Dr. Kerouack praised the governor's decision to mobilize the National Guard to help hospitals.



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SUZEE'S THIRD STREET LAUNDRY

TURNERS FALLS

STAR from page B1

across the English Channel from Southampton, England to Cherbourg, France, ready to enter battle in Europe.

On Christmas Eve of 1944 it was loaded with 2,235 American troops, including I Company of the 3rd Battalion, 262nd Regiment of the 66th Infantry Division “Black Panthers” prepared to fight in the Battle of the Bulge. Having said that there are no usual Christmas-time prayers with-in this memoir, it still has a spiritual effect on me, and I feel the urge to put pen to paper reflecting its significance. So here goes.

It really isn’t the book as it was written that piques my interest. Rather, it’s a letter written by Keith Simons, one of the survivors, to his middle-aged children many years afterwards. In it he pours out his recollections of the sinking, or his witness of it from a different perspective than mentioned in the book.

That letter brings out the error of neglecting one of the events that resulted in a man, born in 1920 and raised in Northfield, Massachusetts, taking a heroic part. His actions, along with those of Keith Simon and eight other I Company “Black Panthers,” saved many from going down with the ship. Of the 763 souls that were lost that horrific night, 62 were from I Company.

In order to help set the scene, the following are excerpts from Keith Simons’ letter:

By this time I Company’s turn to board the ship had come up. But, since the duffel bags hadn’t arrived, F Company took her place in the loading order. This act of fate was to save many I Company lives later.... Sometime around 9 a.m., December 24, the Leopoldville steamed out of Southampton. After the sleepless night before and a long and tiring day we hit the sack fully clothed about 5:45 p.m. I was asleep immediately...

Only minutes later a thunderous explosion slammed me upwards (the torpedo exploded into F deck on the opposite side of the ship from our



location just above E deck) and got me awake. Our emergency station was on the port (left) side of the ship. Soon she listed to port badly, so all GIs were ordered to move to starboard in a futile attempt to right the ship... The crew launched only the lifeboats they deserted ship in. GIs launched a few others that were lowered away.

I learned later most of the crew had deserted the ship and the soldiers in their care, leaving them to fend for themselves. Some I Company men in our group were Bruce Ziegler, Kermit Schwartz, Fred Schlereth, Jack Randles, Bob Brewer, Jim Scarborough, Henry Brasseur – and others whose names I cannot recall...

Some GIs decided their heavy helmets would be a hindrance if they had to abandon ship so they started throwing them over the starboard rail. A direct hit on the swimmer’s head could easily kill or knock him out and drown him. Then someone realized what the heavy headgear could do to a man in the water and shouted, “There are men in the water! Toss ‘em down the deck!”

What a strange sight and sound as dozens and dozens of steel helmets clunked hollowly down the deck and into the water. It’s odd how such an unimportant scene is vividly etched in my mind...

Our group of ten decided combat boots, like steel helmets, would be more drag than help once we were in the water. We loosened them so

we could kick them off easily. We checked one another’s preservers to be sure they were tied securely. A loose one can break your neck if you jump in the water, or it can ride up over your face when in the water. They must be cinched up very tight.

Near the end of the letter:

Because of the late baggage delivery, Company F had taken our place in the loading order and was in compartment F-4 where Company I should have been. This is where the torpedo struck. Seven men from F Company lived. They couldn’t have been in their compartment and survived that horrendous explosion. They were probably in the head, on deck, or visiting somebody elsewhere on the ship.

In all of the preceding only once did the name of Henry Brasseur, the PFC from Northfield, Massachusetts appear. It never appeared in the book, either.

Henry Roy “Bud” Brasseur was the middle of 15 siblings and lived in Northfield, until shortly before his entry into the Army, when he stayed with his sister in Turners Falls. It was from there that he was inducted into the service of his country.

I first met Bud when I was in high school and dating Mary LaChapelle, who would later become my wife. He married her sister Rita, and after living a short time in Riverside, they moved into the LaChapelle four-plex apartments at number 6

Central Street in Turners Falls until he built a home on Davis Street.

Over the years, Bud was one of my mentors, and was like a fourth brother to me. He never really spoke very much to me about his time in the Army. In fact, I only recall his talking about how much he admired manure piles. As machine gun bullets did not pass through them, he and other comrades would seek safety behind the fragrant piles whenever a German machine gun nest opened fire on them.

Even though Henry became my best man at my wedding, I still never heard him talk about that crossing of the English Channel. I probably would not have even known about his experiences on the Leopoldville if I hadn’t seen a copy of the book, and Keith Simons’ letter.

Even then I never knew about his heroism until a short time before his death. It was then that I learned about what I like to call “A Different Christmas Eve Star” – the Bronze Star awarded to him for his brave

actions on the deck of the sinking Leopoldville, and his further actions in the frigid water of the Channel.

I have taken the liberty of including a citation received by Henry R. Brasseur, telling that part of his story better than I can:

“PFC Brasseur prevented a lifeboat, filled with evacuees from a sinking troopship, from capsizing as the lifeboat, the last on the listing ship, was being lowered into the water. In order to steady the lifeboat he grasped and held the rope from the boat even though the rope cut into his hands. PFC Brasseur forsook his opportunity to board the lifeboat and remained on deck assisting others until he was washed from the deck of the sinking ship.

“In the water, PFC Brasseur was pulled under by a panic-stricken soldier. After breaking loose, he ordered the soldier to take hold of a floating duffel bag and pushed him toward a rescue craft where both were pulled aboard. His courageous actions and unbounded devotion were an inspiration to all members of his organization and reflect the highest credit upon himself and the military service.”

“Bud” passed away on May 22, 1999 and is interred at St. Anne’s Cemetery in Turners Falls. On my usual October visits back there to visit my wife’s gravesite in St. Mary’s Cemetery, across the way from St. Anne’s, I always stop by to say a prayer and thank Bud – another of the greatest generation – for always having been there for me when I needed guidance from “My Best Man.”



For those looking for more information on the sinking of the SS Leopoldville, see the documentary *Cover Up: The Sinking of the SS Leopoldville*, broadcast by the History Channel in 1998. (Survivors had been told not to talk about the event afterwards, though censorship was lifted in 1962.)

See also www.leopoldville.org and www.66thinfantrydivision.org. There is also a 2020 film, *The Silent Soldier and the Portrait*, which tells the story of one of the last living survivors of the Leopoldville disaster, John Waller. Waller stole a portrait from the safe in a château in France during the war, and then returned it 70 years later. The documentary, produced and directed by his daughter Garland Waller and her husband Barry Nolan, is available for rent at www.thesilentsoldier.com. The National Geographic Channel also aired a special on the investigation of the wreck of the SS Leopoldville in 2009.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Holiday Recycling Guidelines

FRANKLIN COUNTY – During the holiday season, the average American family disposes of 25% more trash than they usually do. Think about your household: could some of this trash be reduced, reused, recycled, or composted? Reducing holiday trash can help households save money on “Pay As You Throw” town trash stickers or bags, reduce carbon and methane emissions, and protect our environment.

Recycling Tips

Wrapping paper, gift bags, tissue paper, and paper greeting cards and envelopes are all recyclable. However, paper items that contain metallic inks, glitter, wire, or foil (such as foil-lined envelopes) are not acceptable in recycling.

Tape and labels are OK. Remove batteries from singing greeting cards before recycling the cards. Button batteries are accepted for special recycling at Franklin County Solid Waste Management District (FCSWMD) transfer stations; place them in a bag or container and hand them to the attendant.

Please do not put the following items in household recycling: ribbons, bows, tinsel, glossy photo cards, holiday light strings, Christmas tree netting, bubble wrap, paper envelopes lined with bubble wrap, packing peanuts, styrofoam, plastic shipping enve-

lopes, plastic bags, and formed plastic used to package toys, electronics, etc.

Here’s a holiday tip: when opening or wrapping presents, use a paper bag to collect paper recyclables. Other recyclable paper items include catalogs, calendars, paper shopping bags, and cardboard (corrugated and paperboard).

Recyclables from Franklin County towns are processed at the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility (MRF). For recycling guides, including a colorful “yes/no” holiday recycling guide from the Springfield MRF, visit springfieldmrf.org and click on “What’s Recyclable.”

Other Materials

Holiday light strings, power cords, and Christmas tree netting are not acceptable in municipal recycling programs because these “tangles” get wrapped around and jammed in the sorting equipment at recycling facilities. Light strings and power cords are accepted for recycling at scrap metal dealers and in the scrap metal dumpsters at town transfer stations.

Clean, dry packing materials such as bubble wrap, packing peanuts, styrofoam sheets, and inflatable “air pillow” packaging are accepted free for reuse at “pack and ship” stores, such as the UPS Store in Greenfield. In addition, bubble wrap, plastic shipping envelopes (no paper), and inflatable “air pillow” pack-

aging are accepted in plastic bag recycling programs at retail stores. A list of acceptable items is at www.plasticfilmrecycling.org.

When the holidays are over, check with your town about Christmas tree recycling. Your tree may be recycled as mulch this spring.

Reduce and Reuse

In addition to recycling, consider wrapping gifts in reused materials that you might already have at home. Gifts can be creatively wrapped in leftover wrapping paper, old calendar pages, sheet music, maps or map book pages, newspaper, paper bags, old posters, wallpaper scraps, fabric, scarves, comics, or kids’ artwork.

Consider wrapping gifts in reusable decorative tins, cloth bags, Christmas stockings, reusable shopping bags, or baskets. Or make the wrapping part of the gift; use a kitchen towel or oven mitt to hold kitchen utensils or gadgets, or a new bath towel and reusable cloth ribbon to wrap up gifts of bath accessories.

Wrapped gifts can be tied up with twine and adorned with pine or holly branches, pinecones, shells or buttons. Last year’s holiday cards can be cut up to reuse as beautiful gift cards.

One of the most important steps for reusing materials is unwrapping gifts carefully and saving gift-wrap, gift boxes, ribbons, bows, and gift bags for reuse next year.

Compost

Another way to reduce holiday trash is by composting food and paper waste gen-

erated from holiday meals. Food scraps add up: 28% of the residential trash in Massachusetts is compostable material such as food and paper waste, according to Mass-DEP’s 2019 Waste Characterization Study (tinyurl.com/2019WasteStudy).

Municipal compost programs accept all types of food waste, including meat, bones, and cheese, plus paper waste such as paper napkins, paper towels, and more. Unacceptable items include liquids, foil, metal, glass, plastic, and plastic bags.

These programs are free of charge, but access permits may be required. Compost programs are currently operating at the transfer stations in Bernardston, Deerfield, Greenfield (open to non-residents), Leverett, Montague, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Wendell, and Whately.

FCSWMD sells discounted “Earth Machine” home compost bins and compost pails to district residents. Pricing is \$25 or \$55, depending on the resident’s town.

It is not recommended to put meat, bones, dairy in home compost bins. For more details and pricing, which varies by town, contact the waste district or see www.franklincountywaste-district.org/compostbinsales.html.

For more information, contact the FCSWMD: (413) 772-2438, info@franklin-countywastedistrict.org; or visit www.franklincountywastedistrict.org. MA Relay for the hearing impaired: 711 or 1-800-439-2370 (TTY/TDD).

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It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.

- William Carlos Williams

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno
Readers are invited to send poems to the
Montague Reporter at: 177 Avenue A
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or to: poetry@montaguereporter.org

December’s Featured Poet: P.H. Crosby

County Road

The magic of beating the dawn.
Walking in the day that is,
Not the one to be.

Inscape profound.
Deft latticework of silver
The ponds and river wear.

The timid creep of sun
To the penepplain on dun
Mornings of dim days.

No solace of business or pleasure,
Just the thrum of boots
On roadside detritus,

The tick of watch, of heart.

Here stoops another,
Using the now-dawn

For his own special purpose.
A wide, grounded man
with the dogged look

Of someone who’s spent
A lifetime fixing fence.

Our greetings are muted as moss.

Choices

I have a friend who asks us,
“This?” or “This?”
crowdsourcing her patterns,
surrendering autonomy,
giving us sway.
Such a feeling of power we have,
shaping correct choices.
Maybe a little too often it works that way.

Friday Bonus

There’s nothing like the day after
Thanksgiving,
at least if you avoid the maw of Black.
The day before: cacophony of company.
The day after: industry of weekend.
The day of, just a little slack.

Opening

What are they doing out there, foolish cows,
White and red haunches thrust into dawn,
Heads in a thicket? Best to check. Once
We ignored similar antics by our sheep,
Only to find them poisoned, gagging laurel.

Brown leaves and caramel-colored duff
Were all I found when I got there.
A singe of cold, a beetle-browed horizon,
A slash of silver in the dark’s fading sheen.
And greedy heifers pushing through the wire,
Reaching for something they thought might still be green.

Forest

When the first snow falls,
Go to the woods
as dawn shatters darkness.

Muffled in knitted cap
and rustling jacket,
stamp out a random path.

Watch the firs shudder snow,
crackle twigs beneath your feet,
feel the whip of branches.

Pocket your fogged glasses;
in a blur of rising day,
fumble your way

with shadow creatures,
nameless birds,
a departing fuzzy moon.

Abruptly stop
in pin-dropping quiet.

Let not cold deter you.
Come to ground
cheeks ablaze.

In your frozen heart
you may find solitude,
a warm, green glade.

Ode to a Pot of Geraniums Being Thrown Out

Behold the late bloomer!
Even the one
who never got a chance to
before the warmth receded,
and the sun.

Surely no less honor
and no shame
behind this shuttered bud,
living working growing
all the same.

Waiting In Snow

The moon is waiting in snow, Mrs. Hatch would say
at the look of the wide wafer blurred behind clouds.

I was never sure if she meant *waiting* or *wading*.

But the warm flush of her words whenever I see
that grand, stratus-swept sky
and the face of its patient prisoner
catches me still.

Captives are we all in this season,
of immemorial presences
at our shoulders, on our backs, in our hands,
as we polish, carry, wrap and knead
through Advent into the new year.
Mothers in aprons, fathers in ear-flap hats,
uncles hemming and hawing, great-aunts stiff with dress,
brothers wrangling the tree, children
with tattered ornaments, late friends at the airport--
exasperated, hopeful,
waiting to be found.

Our tiny selves at dawn in frigid bedrooms, too excited to move,
wading, waiting in snow.

Featured Poet: P.H Crosby

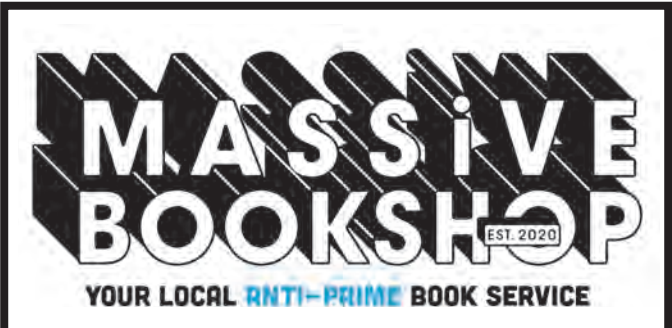
We are very pleased to feature the poems of P.H. Crosby this month, which deftly chart familiar local territory but help us see those settings and sights anew. Crosby recently raised over \$2,000 for the Center for New Americans by writing a poem a day in November. She has been published in *Changing Men*, *The Other Side*, *War*, *Literature and the Arts*, and other venues. Four poems recently appeared in a virtual exhibition at the Hosmer Gallery in Northampton, and a short play was produced online in 2020 by the LAVA Center. Crosby lives in Gill.

RAISA SANDSTROM PHOTO

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Psychedelic Thurs* with DJ MentalDrift. 6 p.m.
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Michael Graffius, Adelaide Fay*. \$. 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 28
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Hip-Hop Night* with Matt Maratea, Michael Wavves, B. Chaps, Dorren Pierre, Illestkill. \$. 8 p.m.
Bishop's Lounge, Northampton: *Tidwell's Treasure, The Wallbangers, Jaqueline*. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30
Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bel-la's Bartok, Folkfaces, Moon Hollow*. \$. 8 p.m.
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Rubblebucket, Carinae*. \$. 9 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31
First Night Northampton: *NRBQ, The Nields, Fancy Trash, The Leafies You Gave Me, Beau Sasser Trio, The Equalites, The Fawns, Cloudbelly, Pamela Means, ReBelle, Lonesome Brothers, Wildcat O'Halloran Band, Ray Mason, Carrie Ferguson, Tracey Grammer*, and many more. Starts at noon. \$. See first-nightnorthampton.org for details.
Bombyx Center, Florence: *Peter Blanchette, Mané Larregla*. \$. 7 p.m.
Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bella's Bartok, Ditrani Bros, Slow Pony*. \$. 8 p.m.
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Deer Tick, Katy Kirby*. \$. 8 p.m.
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: New Year's Eve party feat. *JB on the*

1s and 2s, DJ Drew. \$. 9 p.m.
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Rubblebucket, Home Body*. \$. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Deer Tick, Katy Kirby*. \$. 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2
Academy of Music Theater, Northampton: *Berkshire Bach Ensemble*, playing the "Brandenburg" concerti. \$. 3 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 7
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Eggtooth Productions presents *The Drag Sisters: Underneath the Tree*. \$. 7:30 p.m.
Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Documentary screening, *Keyboard Fantasies* (2020), on Beverly Glenn-Copeland. \$. 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 8
The Palladium, Worcester: *Method Man, Redman*. \$. 7 p.m.
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Eggtooth Productions presents *The Drag Sisters: Underneath the Tree*. \$. 7:30 p.m.
Shutesbury Athletic Club: *The Diamondstones*. \$. 8 p.m.
Bombyx Center, Florence: *House of Waters*. ("The Jimi Hendrix of hammered dulcimer.") \$. 8 p.m.
Stone Church, Brattleboro: *A Band of Killers* (mems. Soul-Live, Rubblebucket), *The Silks*. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 15
Tree House Brewing, South Deerfield: *Iron & Wine*. \$. 6 p.m.
Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Jill Sobule*. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3
Academy of Music Theater, Northampton: *Cowboy Junkies*. \$. 8 p.m.

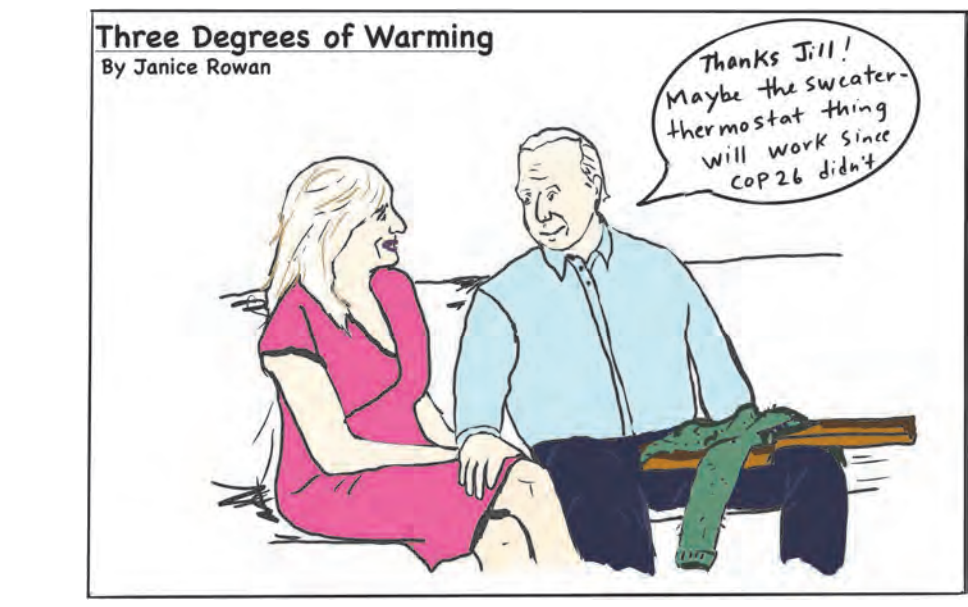
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8
The Palladium, Worcester: *Cattle Decapitation, Creeping Death*, more. \$. 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 4
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Superchunk, Torres*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 11
MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Animal Collective, L'Rain*. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 7
Calvin Theater, Northampton: *The Magnetic Fields*. \$. 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, APRIL 19
Colonial Theater, Keene: *Melissa Etheridge*. \$. 7:30 p.m.



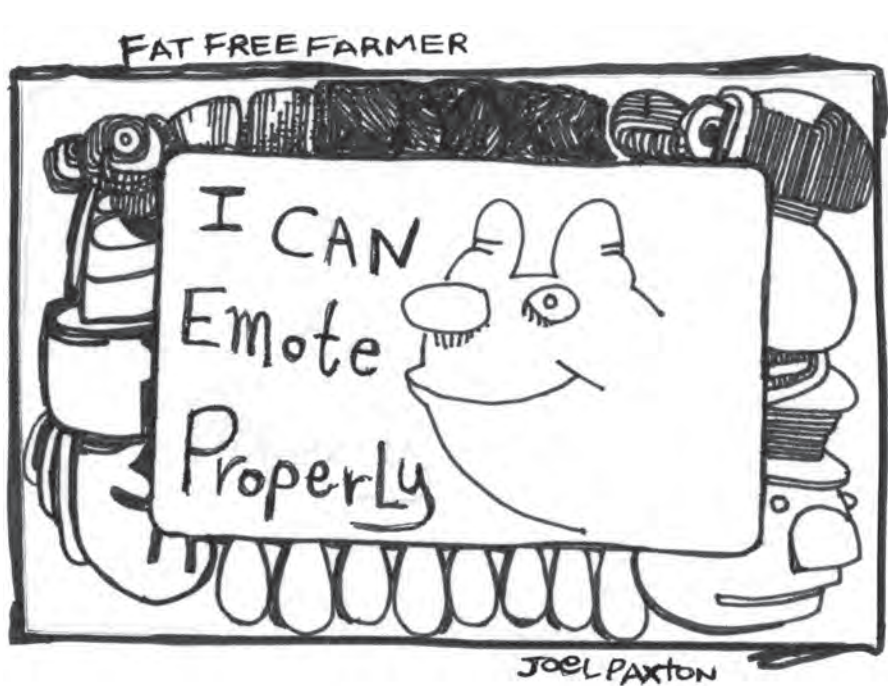
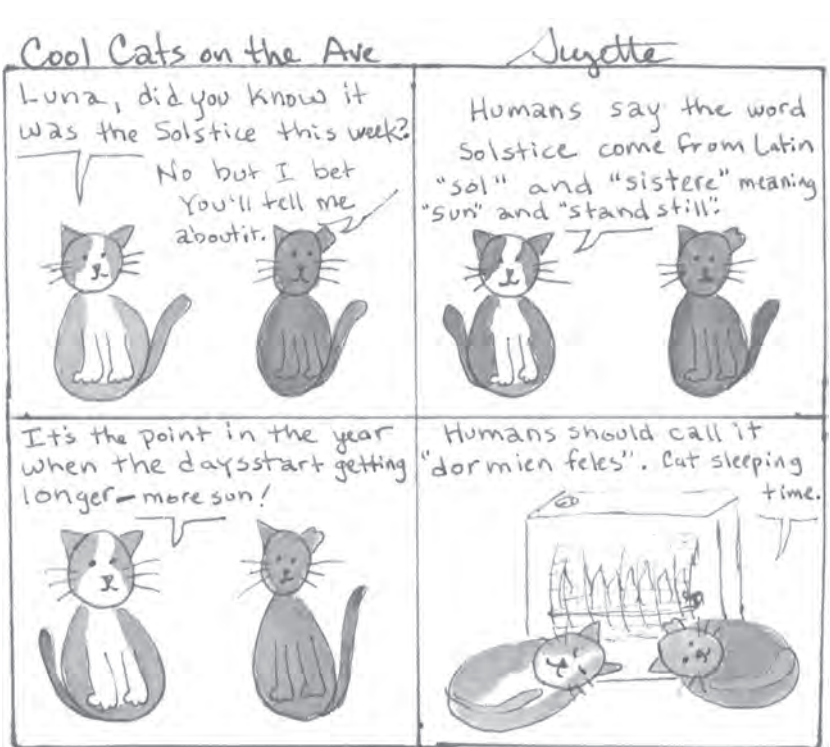
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APPLE CORPS from page B1
Mountains by Alice Herdan-Zuckmayer. I found this book at a local used bookstore, and I only found it because it was published by New York Review Books, who have published some other books I've enjoyed. Their publications have a distinct spine design, so when I saw it I instinctively grabbed it off the shelf. It was lucky I did, because I was thoroughly charmed by the premise and the first few pages I read right there in the store.

The book is a memoir – I'm a sucker for a good memoir – that follows Herdan-Zuckmayer and her family, German citizens who ran afoul of the Nazis during World War II and fled to America, as they land at a farmhouse in rural Vermont. During their five years in the States they learn how to run a homestead and adjust to not only a new culture and language, but also to a world changing at a rapid rate.

Her writing is engaging and funny, and this is just another piece of literature that reminds us that our collective humanity exists beyond borders, language, and era. Some of the anecdotes are timeless, while some of them are hilariously of the times, like when she tells about the coming of the telephone to their rural community. The phone story is worth the price of admission in and of itself!

My second recommendation is written by a friend of mine, and is a great resource for anyone wanting to transform part of their landscape. This book has come up before in these pages in a previous column about the need to transform lawns, but it is worth another mention in case some new readers have not yet picked up their copy.

Lawns into Meadows: Growing a Regenerative Landscape by Owen Wormser makes the case against the current norm of the



A page in the Whole Seed Catalog which shows the radish getting in-depth treatment, with facts, history, and photos.

lawn, and advocates for the reintroduction of meadows into our landscapes. A "Notes" section in the back provides citations for many of the claims made in the narrative, a compelling case that it's time to switch away from conventional turf lawns and envision something a little more in tune with the needs and resources available in our current environment, like a meadow.

The book includes plant recommenda-

tions, answers to frequently asked questions, and provides a lot of learned experience for anyone looking to make their own transformations at home.

It's also a great local resource because Wormser works in our area, and the text includes local case studies which are easy to visit, such as the meadow at the Eric Carle Museum and the one on Crofts Avenue on the slope next to Northampton Town Hall. Be prepared to want to dig up some – if not all – of your lawn after reading it.

If the matte black and white of a traditional book is reminding you of the frozen bleakness outside, then my third recommendation cranks it up to technicolor. Turn down the dull and turn up the gloss for the *Whole Seed Catalog* from Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company. Every year Baker Creek releases two catalogs, a free one which is also great, as well as this bigger catalog (over 500 pages) that you can buy for \$12.95.

The catalog shines with page after page of bright and colorful photos of fruit, vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Whenever I do collage artwork, I can rarely escape the process without including a piece cut out of one of these catalogs. And look out for the company's tendency to photograph giant vegetable varieties in the hands of tiny children!

I did say that these recommendations were for reading, and don't worry, because there's plenty to read in the catalog, too. Recipes are dotted throughout, and the seed listings themselves are full of interesting histories. Some seeds even get article-length treatment for their blurbs.

If the catalog makes you start reaching for your purse, make sure you check out our town's new seed library at the Carnegie Library first. What you're looking for may be

waiting for you right down the street!
My initial idea for this column included a playlist in addition to the book list. When I started collecting songs, I was really feeling the lack of light in these last few days before the Solstice. I was thinking that I could make a playlist that starts in the dark: sad and still, like a long winter's night. Then I would make the list of songs get progressively sunnier until the music sounded like a warm spring day, like the one we're sure will arrive in April for our carriers to deliver this paper to you with our next Apple Corps column.

As I began to add the sunnier songs, I started to cut out the sad ones until I was down to one short intro track left from those wintry tunes. I decided then to jump the season and go straight towards the sun. We can't skip ahead to spring in real life, so maybe we can pretend with our ears. I didn't end up writing about the playlist, but I definitely wrote this column while listening to it, so if you're curious, you can check it out on Spotify at www.tinyurl.com/AppleColumn2021.

Thank you again for coming along with us for another year of our plant and community journey. Have a safe and healthy winter, mask up, and we'll be back before you know it!

The Great Falls Apple Corps is a community group that advocates for edible landscaping and all sorts of community gardening. We maintain the Unity Park Community Garden, a sidewalk food forest at the old St. Andrews' Church, and a monthly free table (winter dates and locations TBA).

If you are interested in volunteering, or want to stay up-to-date with all our goings on, check out our Facebook, Instagram (@greatfallsapplecorps), or email us at greatfallsapplecorps@gmail.com.



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